Towards a Wellbeing Framework: Findings from the Roundtable on Measuring Wellbeing in Northern Ireland

in partnership with

Queen's University Belfast
School of Law

CarnegieUK TRUST
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Towards a Wellbeing Framework:

Background Report prepared for the Roundtable on Measuring Wellbeing in Northern Ireland

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Introduction

The Carnegie UK Trust has been actively involved in promoting our understanding of wellbeing since the establishment of the first Carnegie Roundtable on Measuring What Matters in Scotland, in 2010.

The Trust's discussion paper *Measuring Wellbeing in Northern Ireland: A new conversation for new times* reports on the outcomes of the conference the Trust hosted in autumn, 2013, on measuring economic performance and societal progress in Northern Ireland, and announced the launch of the Carnegie Roundtable on Measuring Wellbeing in Northern Ireland. The Roundtable has the support of Finance Minister, Simon Hamilton MLA and the Assembly Finance Committee Chair, Daithí McKay MLA, for its work in Northern Ireland.

The aim of the Roundtable was to raise awareness of the importance of measuring wellbeing and the positive impact that this has on policy development. The remit of the Roundtable was to explore the next steps necessary to develop a wellbeing framework in Northern Ireland focused on achieving wellbeing outcomes and to seek cross-party support for this.

About the Roundtable

Chairs

Martyn Evans (Co-chair)
Chief Executive, Carnegie UK Trust

Aideen McGinley OBE (Co-chair)
BBC National Trustee for Northern Ireland

Dr Theresa Donaldson	Chief Executive, Lisburn City and Castlereagh District Council
Dr Peter Doran	School of Law, Queen's University Belfast and Carnegie Associate (Executive secretary)
Megan Fearon MLA	Nominee of Chair of Finance & Personnel Committee
David Gavaghan	Chief Executive, Titanic Quarter
Professor Neil Gibson	Director, NI Centre for Economic Policy, University of Ulster
Will Haire	Head of the Policy Profession, NI Civil Service
Kat Healy	Policy, Research and Evaluation Officer, Community Foundation for Northern Ireland
Dr Helen Johnston	Senior Social Policy Analyst, National Economic and Social Council
David McIlveen MLA	Nominee of Minister of Finance & Personnel
Dr Denis McMahon	Deputy Secretary, Office of First and deputy First Minister
Joe Reynolds	Alternate
Dr Tracy Power	Director of Analysis, NI Statistics Research Agency
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Dr Colin Sullivan	Director of Policy and Reform, Department of Finance and Personnel
Dr Bernie Stuart	Alternate
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Dr Jane Wilde CBE	Former Chief Executive, Institute of Public Health in Ireland
Lisa Wilson	School of Sociology, Social Policy and Social Work, Queen's University Belfast
John Woods	School of Law, Queen's University Belfast and Carnegie Associate (Executive Secretary)

(Roundtable representatives contributed on an individual basis. Not all of the views expressed in this report therefore necessarily represent the views of every individual in the Roundtable or their associated organisations.)

1.2 Process of the Roundtable

The Roundtable held four formal meetings in Belfast during 2014.

- The first meeting of the Roundtable was convened on March 24, 2014. The first meeting established a shared understanding of the international and national policy debate on wellbeing and the measurement of economic performance and social progress, and began to assess the relevance of the debate for Northern Ireland's political institutions and identify priority issues.
- The second meeting took place on June 5, 2014. The second meeting covered an update on external engagement activities, an introduction to Scotland's National Performance Framework from Chief Statistician in the Scottish Government, Roger Halliday, and the results from the EU research programme BRAINPOol: Bringing Alternative Indicators Into Policy.
- The third meeting of the Roundtable was held on August 27, 2014. The third meeting involved the Roundtable members dividing into working groups on a new performance framework; ways of working; scrutiny; a Programme for Government; creating a compelling narrative and public participation. The working groups drafted recommendations on these work streams to inform the final report.
- The final Roundtable meeting took place on December 10, 2014, at which the Roundtable members discussed and concluded the final report.

At the first meeting of the Roundtable, it was agreed that there was a need to engage with different interest groups in Northern Ireland in the Roundtable process, through focus groups with members of the public, stakeholder interviews and a wider call for input.

The Roundtable commissioned focus groups with ethnic minorities, older people, young people and women, in order to engage different sections of society with the idea of wellbeing and how it can be measured. A report of the findings was provided to Roundtable members to inform their discussions.

We conducted interviews with key stakeholders in Northern Ireland, including representatives from political parties, local government, trade unions, business, the voluntary sector and a number of thematic groups, to inform the work of the Roundtable.

A call for input into the work of the Roundtable was circulated to other interested parties, primarily using the Trust's networks and social media.

The Roundtable also undertook a study visit to Scotland in June, 2014, to learn from the Scottish Government's world-leading approach to measuring wellbeing. As part of the study visit, the Roundtable members took part in a number of sessions to give them a strategic overview of how the Scottish Government measures what matters. Roundtable members took part in sessions on public

sector reform and outcomes working, the Scotland Performs Roundtable, the development of the National Performance Framework, and practical experience of working to an outcomes approach.

1.3 This Report

This technical – or background – report should be read alongside the Roundtable's *Towards a Wellbeing Framework: Findings from the Roundtable on Measuring Wellbeing in Northern Ireland (2015)*[1]. The technical report sets out some of the Roundtable's detailed thinking – drawing on deliberations by members and various inputs to the Roundtable – to help explain the thinking behind the 10 recommendations to the Northern Ireland Executive (below).

This report was completed before the official announcement of a reduction in the number of Government departments to nine, and the replacement of the OFMDFM by The Executive Office.

This report begins with a short history of the Roundtable and its process of deliberation and consultation. The report proceeds to locate the debate about wellbeing within a series of influential policy conversations, noting how these now offer a timely set of organising concepts and ideas with which to frame local policy deliberations. One of the key recommendations is that a coherent governmental focus on wellbeing will be best served by a focus on outcomes.

The central elements of this report reflect the organisation of the Roundtable's deliberations and emergent priorities: The need for a new narrative; Towards a Wellbeing Framework; Citizen Engagement; New Ways of Working; Scrutiny; and Supporting a Wellbeing Framework.

The Roundtable quickly arrived at a conclusion that a meaningful approach to wellbeing within Government, between the Executive and Local Government, and within communities, will require a new conversation and the construction of a compelling and meaningful narrative. While there will be opportunities for many organisations, including cultural bodies, to help facilitate such a conversation, the primary responsibility will rest with the Executive – or lead departments – if such a narrative is to be reflected in a future high-level statement of government purpose, one that re-locates the privileged focus on the economy within a more textured account of the Government's purpose. An important dimension of the narrative will be an understanding of the ways in which wellbeing must be inflected here to take account of the suffering and experiences that result from conflict.

Chapter Five on a proposed wellbeing framework that could provide an organising platform for future Programmes for Government is offered with illustrated examples of outcomes and supporting indicators to support the high-level commitments agreed as part of the PFG process. The Roundtable members concluded that any wellbeing framework must be the culmination of a meaningful engagement with citizens, form part of a commitment to ongoing engagement, and signal the beginning of a new way of doing things across the public sector and among the Government's

1 Doran P et al, *Measuring Wellbeing in Northern Ireland: A new conversation for new times.* Carnegie UK Trust 2014.

partners. An important dimension of the transformation in the ways of governing will be a culture shift in the central role of scrutiny, notably a shift from a culture that upholds a cycle of blame and risk aversion to one that embeds a cycle of learning and capacity building. To support the shift in ways of working across Government – Government reimagined and reorganised as a single organisation – the Roundtable also gives some consideration to those practices and methodologies that will support the processes associated with using a Wellbeing Framework, including policy appraisal approaches, evaluation and statistical support.

BOX 1.1 THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CARNEGIE ROUNDTABLE ON MEASURING WELLBEING IN NORTHERN IRELAND

The Northern Ireland Executive should:

1. Integrate the concept of wellbeing as our collective purpose into its mission statement for all public services as part of the 2016-2021 Programme for Government.
2. Lead a society-wide conversation on wellbeing which feeds into the development of a Wellbeing Framework to guide the work of the NI Executive.
3. Agree a set of strategic commitments and outcomes (the Wellbeing Framework) and place this at the core of the 2016-2021 Programme for Government.
4. Set out, through the future Programmes for Government, the reforms required to achieve the Wellbeing Framework, including a whole-of-government operational culture.
5. Develop a training and capacity-building programme for all those bodies responsible for implementation.
6. Embed the Wellbeing Framework by linking it to collaborative budget processes and informing the allocation process.
7. Work with local government to agree a new relationship to fully integrate and monitor local outcomes within the context of the Wellbeing Framework.
8. Invest in communicating the Wellbeing Framework and trend data to the public by a range of techniques including data visualisation, live dashboards, social and traditional media.
9. Lay an annual report before the Northern Ireland Assembly for debate on the progress made by the Programme for Government towards outcomes described in the Wellbeing Framework.
10. Convene a Standing Advisory Group to provide ongoing technical support, advise on capacity-building activities and provide external review of the implementation of the Wellbeing Framework.

2. The Rise of Wellbeing as a Framework for Governments

2.1 The Theory of Wellbeing

Wellbeing is an integral, but often tacit, dimension of development. Wellbeing is associated with the cultivation of an enabling environment for citizens to enjoy long, healthy, creative and valued lives. Alongside the constituent elements of wellbeing such as health, good work, convivial relationships, and access to a healthy environment – locally and globally – society must also pursue substantive freedoms by tackling inequalities, promoting a sustainable economy, and respecting planetary or ecological boundaries.

> *'The great shock of 20th-century science has been that living systems cannot be understood by analysis. The properties of the parts are not intrinsic properties, but can be understood only within the context of the larger whole. Thus the relationship between the parts and the whole has been reversed. In the systems approach, the properties of the parts can be understood only from the organisation of the whole. Accordingly, systems thinking does not concentrate on basic building blocks, but rather on basic principles of organisation.*[2]' (Capra and Luigi Luisi 2014, p.66)

In developing our thinking about wellbeing, we have been influenced by the capabilities approach of Amartya Sen[3] and Martha Nussbaum[4] . This approach to wellbeing goes far beyond mental and physical health and includes people's objective conditions and capabilities. Sen and Nussbaum's understanding of wellbeing has important political insights for post-conflict societies, including opportunities to link wellbeing to the cultivation of conditions for democratic participation, engagement and autonomy.

Rather than submit to cynicism and disillusion, we must rekindle our conviction that people and communities have a deep and instinctive desire to work for social and political participation and transformation. Indeed, these democratic capabilities are – in themselves – valuable for human life and wellbeing. Meaningful democracy and the exercise of democratic reasoning are intrinsically valuable as a means and as an end in the pursuit of wellbeing. Much is at stake when citizens are reduced to the status of passive recipients of policy and services.

Our work identified three reasons for moving towards wellbeing as our shared, collective purpose:

1. There is a wealth of evidence that shows that Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has had its day as the sole measure of social progress. This is not to say that it is irrelevant, but rather that other measurements must sit alongside it. Economic outcomes are part of any wellbeing

[2] Capra, F and Luigi Luisi, P *The Systems View of Life: A Unifying Vision*, Cambridge University Press, 2014.
[3] Sen, *A Development as Freedom*, Oxford University Press, 1999.
[4] Nussbaum, M.C. *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach*, Harvard University Press, 2011.

framework, but they should be on an equal footing with and informed by social and environmental outcomes.

2. Using wellbeing as a guiding narrative helps governments to focus on medium and long-term outcomes for citizens and communities, rather than just inputs and processes. The most intractable or wicked challenges facing society have formed over decades and resolving them will require sustained efforts well beyond a single Assembly mandate.
3. Public services in the 21st century are complex, focusing increasingly on prevention and requiring joined-up services and an engagement with service users. A wellbeing narrative can be part of the mix in helping services focus on outcomes for citizens rather than on silos and reactive top-down management. It can shift the focus in policy design from the provider interest to the user interest. Appropriate responses will often demand the interruption of embedded and habituated institutional responses as well as fresh approaches.

Wellbeing is a holistic concept, bringing together social, environmental, democratic and economic outcomes (see Figure 2. 1). A wellbeing approach asks us to consider how society is progressing in the round, rather than using economic indicators as a proxy for wellbeing or focusing on specific areas at the expense of others. It also asks us to look at the outcomes, focusing on how people's lives are improving (or not) rather than allowing the conversation to centre – in a mechanistic fashion - on the inputs or processes we use to improve society. Contemporary governance must be re-imagined as an integral part of complex living systems.

Figure 2.1: What is wellbeing?

Sen and Nassbaum's approach differs from traditional economic approaches by putting wellbeing, or quality of life, at the heart of the evaluations, rather than utility (happiness) or choice. They ask if people have 'capabilities for flourishing' and pose key questions around how well people are able to function in society. For example, are people well-nourished? Can they take part in the life of community? Can they find worthwhile jobs? Can they live to enjoy old age?

Ingrid Robeyns[5] has described the capability approach as a broad normative framework for the evaluation and assessment of individual wellbeing and social arrangements, the design of policies, and proposals about societal change. It can be used to empirically assess aspects of an individual's or group's wellbeing, such as inequality or poverty. She holds that the approach can also be used as an alternative to mainstream cost-benefit analysis, or as a framework to develop and evaluate policies such as welfare state design in affluent societies. It can also be used as a normative basis for social and political criticism. It is not a theory that can explain poverty, inequality or wellbeing but, instead, provides concepts and a framework that can help to *conceptualise* and *evaluate* these phenomena.

[5] Robeyns, I. 'How has the Capability Approach been put into Practice', *Journal of Political Philosophy*, Volume 14, No. 3, 2006, pp.351-76.

The growing number of applications should not, however, obscure the fact that the approach remains radically under-specified and remains a 'work in progress'.

The capability approach provides a more meaningful framework than current debates that place too much emphasis on subjective wellbeing. Subjective wellbeing has gathered significant attention in the past five years, with statistical offices at national and international level developing best practice on measuring happiness[6].

These approaches tend to provide one number, for example the percentage of the population that is happy, or satisfied, at any given time. Alternatively, measures reflect an average satisfaction score for the population – usually out of 10. Statisticians can then break these down to compare across geographies or explore what makes people happy or satisfied with their life (though there are, of course, important distinctions to be made here between correlation and causation). While subjective wellbeing is only one aspect of the wider wellbeing movement, it is not uncommon to see wellbeing reduced merely to subjective wellbeing (see, for example, the influential Legatum Report) leading to conceptual confusion.

Box 2.1: How does 'Scotland Performs' differ from the UK Office of National Statistics (ONS) programme on Measuring National Wellbeing?

- When the UK ONS programme on Measuring National Wellbeing began, Scotland Performs was already well established as the measurement tool for national level performance, underpinning the National Outcomes that had come into existence in 2007. The methodology in Scotland has been to draw on a range of the best sources that were available, in a large part from core surveys, to address the full range of outcomes for society as a whole – across social, economic and environmental wellbeing. This is reflected by the 'dashboard' model of indicators.
- The original focus of the ONS programme on Measuring National Wellbeing is based on measurements of subjective wellbeing. It was felt, in Scotland, that the ethos and function of Scotland Performs was somewhat different from the aims of an approach built on subjective measures.
- Given that the purpose of the National Performance Framework is to focus collective effort across the Scottish public sector on outcomes, it was felt that it was important to assign an assessment of change. This was to help the organisation visualise and understand where it was making progress and where it was not doing so, so that adjustments could be made to policy/delivery. The ONS programme on Measuring National Wellbeing is by definition a measurement framework and presents time series of the measures (as does Scotland Performs) without the need for assessing performance.

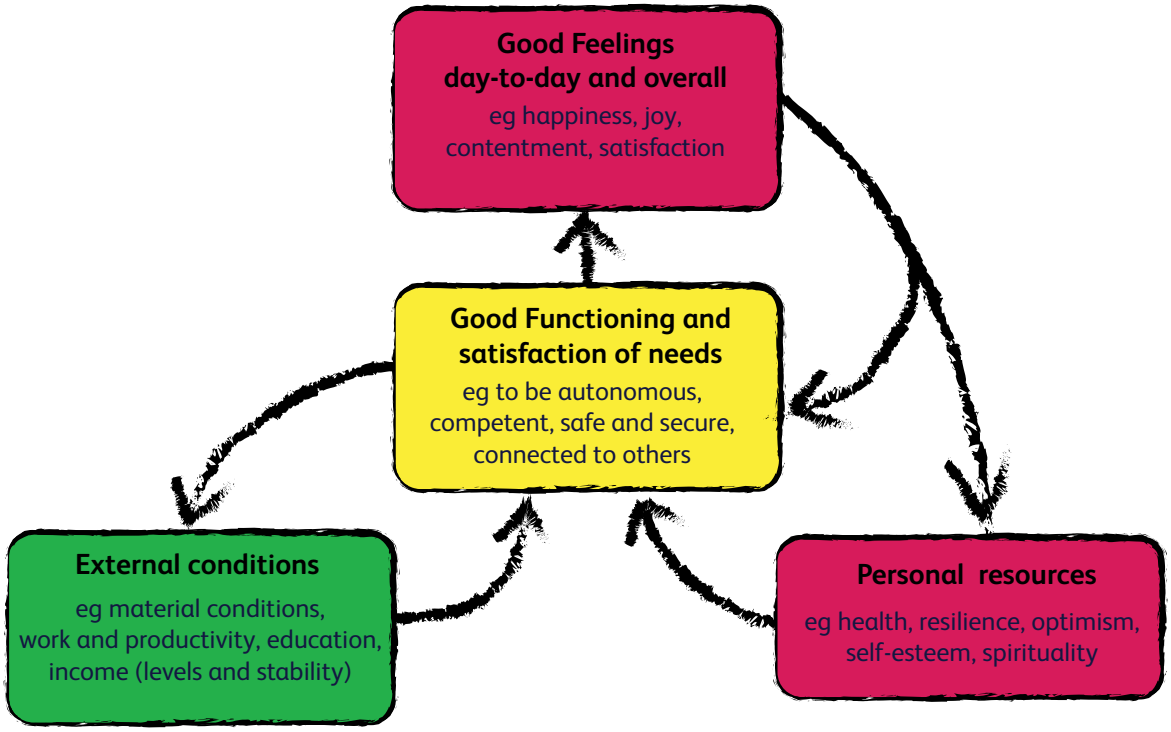
The retention of measures of objective wellbeing is critical in understanding the capabilities of people to flourish in a society. In addition, a number of those who gave evidence to the Roundtable cautioned against a simplistic view of wellbeing as personal happiness due to concerns about removing the emphasis on societal factors that impinge on happiness. For example, one submission commented that:

[6] See, for example, Tomlinson, M.W. and Kelly, G.P. 'Is Everybody Happy? The politics and measurement of national wellbeing', *Policy and Politics*, Vol. 41, No. 2, 04.2013, p. 139-157.

'We have known for centuries that people tend to adapt their expectations to their circumstances, indeed that it is rational for them to do so – that's what Aesop's fable of the fox and the grapes is about. So we should expect that inequalities in peoples subjectively reported wellbeing will be smaller than inequalities in the conditions of their lives. Clearly, we should not conclude from this that inequalities of condition aren't important. What we should conclude is that it is wrong to rely exclusively on subjectively reported well-being'.

In evidence to the Roundtable, the New Economics Foundation cautioned against setting out what they saw as a false dichotomy between subjective and objective wellbeing. Their dynamic model of wellbeing (see Figure 2.2) links the interrelated fields of subjective wellbeing (good feelings), functionings (based on the Capabilities Approach) and external conditions and personal resources (measured largely through objective measures of wellbeing).

Figure 2.2: Adapted from New Economic Foundations Dynamic Model of Wellbeing[7]



Measuring external conditions and personal resources (objective wellbeing) has a long history in both academia and government statistical agencies. Measuring outcomes, or quality of life, is usually done through a range of objective indicators. What turns objective indicators into a wellbeing approach is the focus on developing a holistic picture built up of different indicators relating to different aspects of wellbeing, rather than focusing solely on service-specific indicators (for example, health indicators for health policy, education indicators for education policy and so on).

[7] New Economics Foundation (2015) http://www.nef-consulting.co.uk/our-services/training-capacity-building/resources-toolkits/a-dynamic-model-of-well-being/

In exploring these external conditions and personal resources, the OECD addresses the measurement of wellbeing with evidence spanning 11 different dimensions of life:

- income and wealth
- jobs and earnings
- housing
- health status
- work-life balance
- education and skills
- social connections
- civic engagement and governance
- environmental quality
- personal security
- subjective wellbeing.

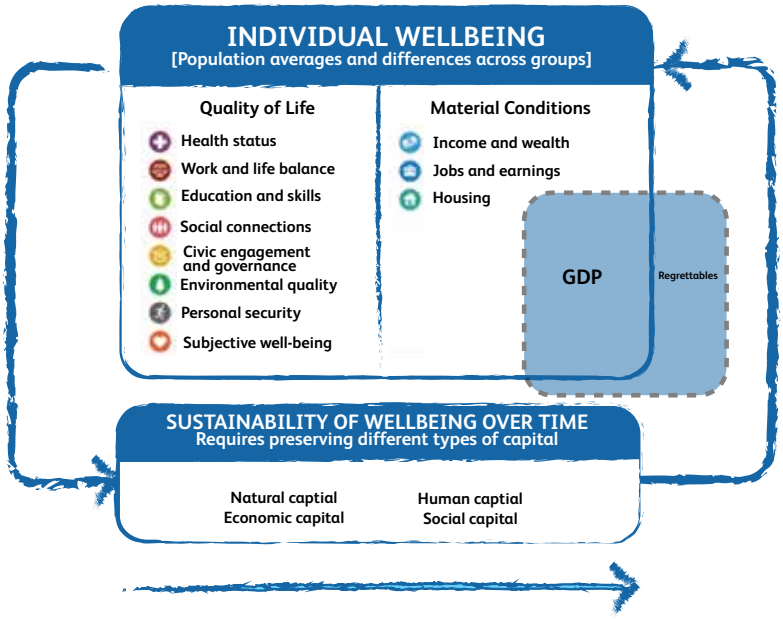
These domains of wellbeing are common across many wellbeing indicator sets and supported by research into their impact on subjective wellbeing. Evidence submitted to the Roundtable did raise queries about the extent to which the language of 'domains' obfuscates the important distinction between causation and correlation.

While the domains are relatively static, it is however important to note that the indicators that sit underneath the domains must be relevant to the society being assessed. For example, the indicators used to measure personal security in the UK regularly refer to 'fear of crime' as this often has more of an impact on wellbeing than actual crime rates. In less stable countries, this logic is questionable.

The distribution of wellbeing across society – for example, on the basis of gender, income, age and education - is also examined by the OECD and by many wellbeing indicator sets. For example, the Human Development Index for 2014 was adjusted for the impact of inequality, leading to a drop of 12 places for the United States of America (the UK actually increased its ranking by three places).

For the OECD, and a number of other submissions to the Roundtable, the domains of wellbeing must be embedded in a conceptual framework that also includes consideration for the sustainability of wellbeing over time (see Figure 2.3).

Figure 2.3: Adapted from OECD Wellbeing Conceptual Framework[8]



2.2 A Global Wellbeing Conversation

There have been a number of international 'Beyond GDP' and Measuring Wellbeing programmes (see Box 2.2) that have sought to replace the GDP figure with indicators that allow policymakers to:

a) target good-quality growth that improves wellbeing;
b) avoid bad-quality growth that reduces wellbeing; and
c) sometimes to sacrifice growth (where wellbeing does better without it).

Box 2.2 Internationally-Significant Wellbeing Initiatives

1968 President John F Kennedy speaks of the failures of GDP as a measure of social progress

1974 Bhutan proposes Gross National Happiness

1992 UN publishes first Human Development Index (influenced by Sen)

2003 Canadian Index of Wellbeing initiated

2004 OECD inaugurates Measurement of Progress

2007 EU launches 'Beyond GDP' initiative

2008 France commissions report on the measurement of wellbeing

2011 UK commissions ONS Measuring National Wellbeing programme

2011 Scottish Roundtable on Measuring Economic Performance and Social Progress reports

2011 OECD publishes Better Life Index

2014 Legatum Commission on Wellbeing and Policy reports

In February, 2008, Nicolas Sarkozy asked Joseph Stiglitz, Amartya Sen and Jean Paul Fitoussi to create the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress[9] to review how statistics are used to measure progress in the economy and society. It had the following objectives:

- To identify the limits of GDP as an indicator of economic performance and social progress, including the problems with its measurement;
- To consider what additional information might be required for the production of more

[8] OECD *Wellbeing and Social Progress* 2013 http://www.oecd.org/std/Measuring%20Well-Being%20and%20Progress%20Brochure.pdf
[9] Stiglitz, J, Sen, A, Fitoussi, J-P *Report of the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress*, CMEPSP 2009.

relevant indicators of social progress;
- To assess the feasibility of alternative measurement tools;
- To discuss how to present the statistical information in an appropriate way.

The Commission's 2009 report, which we refer to as the Stiglitz, Sen, Fitoussi Report, has been hugely influential. It builds on an increasing volume of academic and professional literature looking at how to improve measurement of economic performance and wider social progress. The 'unifying theme' of the Stiglitz, Sen, Fitoussi Report is that the time is ripe for our measurement system to shift emphasis from measuring economic production to measuring people's wellbeing.

The Stiglitz, Sen, Fitoussi Report makes 12 recommendations divided between the three topics of Classical GDP Issues, Quality of Life and Sustainability. These recommendations are summarised in Box 2.3.

Box 2.3 Recommendations from the Stiglitz, Sen, Fitoussi Report[10]

Classical GDP Issues

1. When evaluating material wellbeing, look at income and consumption rather than production.
2. Emphasise the household perspective.
3. Consider income and consumption jointly with wealth.
4. Give more prominence to the distribution of income, consumption and wealth.
5. Broaden income measures to non-market activities.

Quality of Life

6. Quality of life depends on people's objective conditions and capabilities. Steps should be taken to improve measures of people's health, education, personal activities and environmental conditions. In particular, substantial effort should be devoted to developing and implementing robust, reliable measures of social connections, political voice, and insecurity that can be shown to predict life satisfaction.
7. Quality of life indicators in all dimensions covered should assess inequalities in a comprehensive way.
8. Surveys should be designed to assess the links between various quality of life domains for each person, and this information should be used when designing policies in various fields.
9. Statistical offices should provide the information needed to aggregate across quality of life dimensions, allowing the construction of different indexes.
10. Measures of both objective and subjective well-being provide key information about people's quality of life. Statistical offices should incorporate questions to capture people's life evaluations, hedonic experiences and priorities in their own surveys.

Sustainability

11. Sustainability assessment requires a well-identified dashboard of indicators. The distinctive feature of the components of this dashboard should be that they are interpretable as variations of some underlying 'stocks'. A monetary index of sustainability has its place in such a dashboard but, under the current state of the art, it should remain essentially focused on economic aspects of sustainability.
12. The environmental aspects of sustainability deserve a separate follow-up based on a well-chosen set of physical indicators. In particular, there is a need for a clear indicator of our proximity to dangerous levels of environmental damage (such as that associated with climate change or the depletion of fishing stocks).

[10] *Ibid*

The Commission also concluded by recommending that national Roundtables be established to explore social progress. This was the inspiration for our Carnegie Roundtable on Measuring Wellbeing in Northern Ireland, supported by the School of Law at Queens University Belfast.

In 2011, UN member states unanimously adopted a resolution noting that GDP *'was not designed to and does not adequately reflect the happiness and wellbeing of people in a country'*. They instead invited countries 'to pursue the elaboration of additional measures that better capture the importance of the pursuit of happiness and wellbeing in development with a view to guiding their public policies.' The resolution empowered Bhutan to convene a High Level Meeting looking at 'Happiness and Wellbeing: Defining a New Economic Paradigm' in April, 2012. In June, 2012, the Rio+20 'Earth Summit' further endorsed calls for new statistical approaches to complement GDP (ie GDP+).

The language has moved over time from Beyond GDP to wellbeing. It appears to the Roundtable that this change in language relates less to a conceptual shift than a pragmatic one whereby wellbeing is able to draw in a wider group of advocates. The EU-funded BRAINPOoL project[11] found the following barriers to using alternative ('beyond GDP') indicators in policymaking:

- resource constraints;
- problems of data availability, quality and robustness;
- conservatism, risk-aversion and retention of the dominant GDP paradigm.

Overall, the BRAINPOol research into alternative indicators concluded that the concept of 'Beyond GDP' is not yet underpinned by a coherent, politically-compelling narrative. The strength of the wellbeing movement is its ability to combine the economic and the non-economic, rather than present it as an either/or scenario. This can help form the basis of a new narrative that is politically inclusive.

2.3 Mixed Messages on Wellbeing in Northern Ireland

The Community Relations Council's Ireland Peace Monitoring Reports (#1-3) (2012, 2013, 2014)[12] has set out an indicator framework over three years in an attempt to monitor the journey out of conflict. The indicator framework is broken down into four domains, which provide the structure for the three reports:

- The sense of safety
- Equality (horizontal and vertical)
- Cohesion and sharing
- Political Progress.

The second and third reports include brief sections on wellbeing under the dimension of 'Cohesion

[11] Whitby, A (WFC) et al., 'BRAINPOoL Project Final Report: Beyond GDP – From Measurement to Politics and Policy', BRAINPOoL deliverable 5.2, A collaborative programme funded by the European Union's Seventh Programme for research, technological development and demonstration under grant agreement No. 283024 WFC (World Future Council), March 31, 2014.

[12] The Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report is a project of the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council, with funding from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust. The latest report is Nolan, P 'Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report: Number Three', CRC 2014. See: http://www.community-relations.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Introduction1.pdf

and Sharing', implicitly suggesting a conceptual link between our experience of emergence from conflict and measures of wellbeing. The authors conclude that there is conflicting evidence about the state of wellbeing among the population. While carefully-designed happiness surveys show the place to be the most content in the UK, figures for suicide, self-harm and mental health suggest that for some, the reality is quite different (NIPMR 2014:109). People here also scored the second highest in the UK on the anxiety scale[13], with Belfast the most anxious place in Northern Ireland.

These contradictory messages have continued, with reports that Northern Ireland is the 'happiest' place to live in the UK[14] appearing in the same month as a report about high levels of dependency on prescription drugs, high unemployment and a looming political crisis in the political institutions. One of the authors of the ONS report, Dawn Snape, claimed that people in Northern Ireland were a 'conundrum', having scored highly in all aspects of the wellbeing index despite having a high unemployment rate.

Of course many apparent conundrums have their origins in our technologies of perception and measurement, pointing up the conceptual complexity inherent in the business of measuring wellbeing. Like beauty, a conundrum might lie in the eye of the beholder.

The mixed messages at play in Northern Ireland were also discussed by a number of the stakeholders who engaged with the Roundtable. Some felt that there is no shared narrative at the moment, though others pointed to a default acceptance of the neoliberal ideology, which has taken hold in large parts of global and local economic commentary and practice. Others commented on the plethora of visionary statements while any sense of holistic wellbeing remains absent.

A new wellbeing framework for policy evaluation can bring new levels of transparency to both the economic and non-economic sources of wellbeing and how the resulting outcomes can be cultivated.

In a post-conflict society, the wellbeing narrative invites a deep engagement with both the economic and non-economic dimensions associated with the creation of a more secure, equal and democratic polity, and the cultivation of those discursive, mental and embodied qualities that deepen meaningful citizen engagement across communities and with the political institutions.

2.4 Wellbeing, Public Value and Public Service Reform

As the *Beyond GDP* movement was beginning to change its language towards wellbeing, a parallel development in social policy has also been nudging governments in the same direction. By the mid-2000s, the literature was shifting from support for new public management (with its focus on targets) towards public value. Public Value consists of three distinct but interrelated processes:

- clarifying and specifying strategic goals and public value outcomes;
- creating the environment necessary to achieve these outcomes; and
- utilising the required operational resources, such as staff, skills and technology (Benington and Moore, 2011[15]).

The first review by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development on outcomes was carried out in 2005 and highlighted the international trend towards measuring outcomes in public

[13] ONS Personal Wellbeing Across the UK, 2012/2013, published 23 October 2013.

[14] BBC News Online report, 24 September 2014: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-29348032

[15] Benington, J. and Moore, M.(eds) Public Value: Theory and Practice Macmillan 2011.

services (OECD, 2005[16]). For example, New Zealand was the first country in the OECD to introduce performance-oriented budgeting and performance management and more recently, has moved from output focuses to outcome focuses within its system of public performance measurement.

As outcomes-based performance management has developed, a plethora of toolkits and guides have been published to help service providers understand and measure outcomes (Friedman, 2015[17]). Belfast City Council has been working with Friedman to apply results-based accountability to their work for some time. These approaches focus heavily on developing whole-systems approaches to allow public services to explore the links between different interventions and outcomes.

The Scottish approach was developed within the context of public service reform. However, once established, it became clear that it also provided a dashboard of wellbeing indicators that met many of the recommendations set out by the Stiglitz, Sen, Fitoussi report. In Scotland, we see the coming together of two separate traditions of measurement (Beyond GDP and public value) into the wellbeing approach.

The public value approach links wellbeing more closely to policy-making than previous Beyond GDP initiatives. Wellbeing has value as a focus for policy makers because it relates directly to outcomes for citizens, provides a common framework within which different objectives and perspectives can be discussed, and *'lends itself to a rethinking of policy design, processing and engagement.'* (Carnegie UK Trust, 2014[18]). As Finance and Personnel Minister, Simon Hamilton, and the Chair of the Finance and Personnel Committee, Daithí McKay, have noted, the global conversation about wellbeing is about much more than measurement. It is also about 'doing things differently'.

As such, the next set of questions considered by the wellbeing movement related specifically to what can be achieved by a wellbeing approach to policymaking. International case study research by the Carnegie UK Trust found that wellbeing frameworks can inform policy in five key ways.

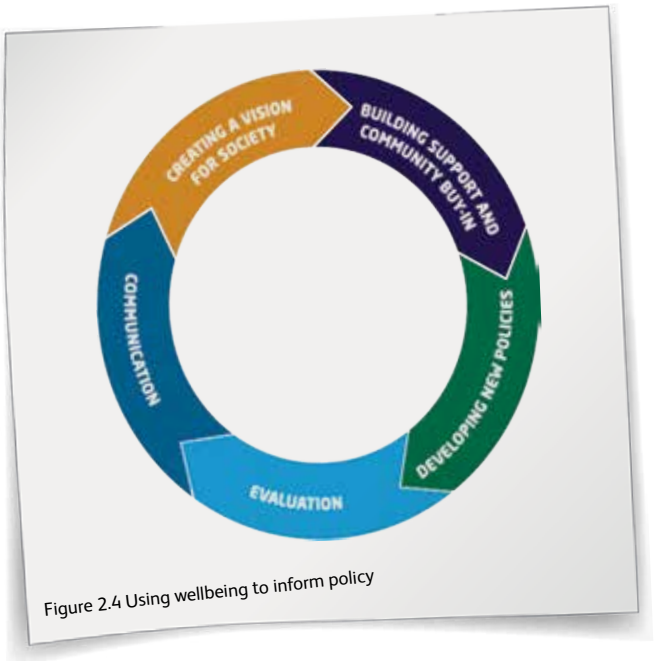


Figure 2.4 Using wellbeing to inform policy

[16] Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2005, Modernising Government: The Way Forward France: OECD http://www.oecd.org/gov/modernisinggovernmentthewayforward.htm

[17] Friedman, M. Results Based Accountability http://resultsaccountability.com/ 2015

[18] Carnegie UK Trust *Measuring Wellbeing in Northern Ireland: A new conversation for new times http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/2013/measuring-wellbeing-in-northern-irelan d*

These findings are similar to those referred to in the submission by the OECD to the Roundtable. Taken together, these sources show that wellbeing can be valuable to policymaking for several reasons:

- Citizen-focus: Wellbeing is about the experiences of ordinary people. Focusing on wellbeing means focusing on the final outcomes that matter to people's quality of life and how these outcomes are distributed across society. It can therefore provide a useful complement to system-level measures of performance (such as pollution or GDP).
- Highlighting gaps and omissions: New measures of wellbeing can shine a light on outcomes that have not always been systematically included in decision-making in the past. This includes outcomes such as social connections, quality of place, civic engagement and work-life balance. A focus on equalities can also raise issues around groups who are disadvantaged across a range of outcome measures.
- Improving scrutiny: Focusing policy on wellbeing requires policymakers to state clearly what they understand wellbeing to be and how they will monitor improvements or declines in wellbeing over time. This, in turn, enables people to scrutinise those choices and propose alternatives, as well as giving people a framework in which they can state their preferences in systematic ways across a range of outcomes.
- Supporting joined-up working: The holistic nature of wellbeing brings the trade-offs between different outcomes into sharper focus. A clear framework for wellbeing spells out the full range of outcomes that policymakers need to consider when designing and estimating the likely impact of a policy, and when evaluating its results. This can highlight synergies where policies may be mutually reinforcing, but also reveal conflicts where policy initiated in one part of government might affect the achievement of objectives elsewhere. In turn, this can improve the transparency with which wellbeing outcomes are prioritised across government, again facilitating open debate.

In their submission, the OECD also offered words of caution about the limits of a wellbeing approach to policy: '[wellbeing] *should not be understood as providing a technocratic solution to solve the prioritisation dilemmas that are at the heart of government – which concern values as much as numbers.*'

Enabling Communities, Enabling State

If we are also to realise the aspirations set out in the NI Executive's *Programmes for Government*, new ways must be found to cultivate a spirit and practice of common purpose across government, with local government, and with the active engagement of all elements of civil society. It is a task in which the political parties must be joined by a newly-enlivened civil society. The debate around the concept of 'the enabling state' has begun to influence thinking about the nature of government in a number of parts of Europe, including the UK and the Republic of Ireland. It was noted that this debate could

inform local approaches to public sector reform, and opportunities to shape local government. The Carnegie UK Trust believes that governments are forging a new kind of relationship with individual citizens and communities. Traditional 'top down' public services are being discarded in favour of models built from the 'bottom up'. Individuals and communities are being given new opportunities for greater control over their interaction with the state and their own wellbeing[19].

Within the context of the OFMdFM's *Delivering Social Change* programme, the concept of 'Enabling Communities' has been explored with a view to a shift in the relationship between the Government and society, where the capacity of individuals, families and communities is supported to work with the Government to develop their full potential. The vision of an enabled community consists of empowered citizens who work together to take responsibility for their community and the wellbeing of all its members.

There is recognition that as a post-conflict society, policymakers in Northern Ireland are operating in particularly demanding circumstances and face a number of distinct yet interrelated social and economic challenges that impact on health, wellbeing and educational outcomes. The 'Enabling Communities' vision is viewed as particularly apt in the wake of local government reform, with nascent councils that are expected to be citizen-focused, responding to the needs, aspirations and concerns of their communities, and exercising a new statutory duty of community planning and development responsibilities. Some have spoken of a shift towards 'differential devolution' as a corrective to the overbearing bureaucratic state. As one stakeholder commented to the Roundtable, the historical relationship between central government and cities or local government – acting as 'gate keeper' in a command-and-control system – has been that of a 'parent to child'.

A CUKT-sponsored Roundtable on the enabling state, convened in Belfast, concluded that while the consociational model of power-sharing has brought consensus on key issues such as the Programme for Government and economic and investment strategies (until recently), a tendency to bureaucratic solutions as a defence against allegations of discrimination have led to audit arthritis, procurement paralysis, consultation fatigue and public appointment sclerosis – leading to frustration amongst those arguing for progressive advances and more urgent social change. A 'managerial state' has a place, the report concludes, but that alone is insufficient for full responsiveness, especially if it tends to the technocratic and top-down too. (Carnegie UK Trust, 2013)[20].

[19] Carnegie UK Trust A Routemap to an Enabling State, 2014 http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/2014/a-route-map-to-the-enabling-state

[20] Oliver, Q. The Enabling State in Northern Ireland: Key issues raised at our Belfast Roundtable, Carnegie UK Trust, 2013. See: http://carnegieuktrust.org.uk/CMSPages/GetFile.aspx?guid=b8c0dff6-5fa8-4a80-9d76-1cc310a69849

3. The Need for a New Narrative

3.1 Cultivating New Conversations, New Narratives

From the outset, the Roundtable has identified the opportunity to cultivate new conversations for new times, and facilitate the emergence of a new narrative or vision of governance drawing on the language of wellbeing. It is anticipated that a new narrative can help in the process of building a sense of common purpose and collaborative ways of working across our government departments, agencies and local government, and reconnect the style, content and delivery of the Programme for Government with the day-to-day experience and aspirations of citizens, communities and places. We envisage a society-wide conversation on wellbeing – led by the NI Executive – which can feed into the development of a Wellbeing Framework, consisting of a high-level statement of purpose, strategic commitments and outcomes. An integral part of that conversation will be the analyses and reforms to ways of working across the public sector and beyond that are necessary to achieve the outcomes set out in the Wellbeing Framework. Ultimately, the priorities reflected in the Framework must flow from the decisions of the Executive parties and their priorities for the upcoming and future Programmes for Government. Wellbeing and a Wellbeing Framework provide a conceptual framework and an organising platform or process that can support the delivery of a Programme for Government.

We face a number of challenges, around poverty, mental health and far-reaching debates on the state of public finances, which are shared by many regions and countries at this time. All institutions require public trust and confidence. This can be damaged if disconnects between politics and the lives of citizens are allowed to replace a sense of ownership, accountability and engagement. These challenges are layered with our recent history and our desire to move forward as a post-conflict society.

But in order to move forward, we need an idea of where we are going and one that resonates with citizens. Wellbeing provides an easily understood concept which can form the basis of a new approach to the relationship between citizens and government, focusing on assets and shared responsibilities between citizens, communities, government and the private sector. The concept of wellbeing can be used to link the everyday experiences and priorities of people with the sometimes remote and often opaque world of policymaking and politics.

> *'I will tell you something about stories*
> *They aren't just entertainment*
> *Don't be fooled*
> *They are all we have,*
> *All we have to fight off illness and death.*
> *You don't have anything if you don't have stories.'*
> (Leslie Marmon Silko, cited in Lederach and Lederach 2010)[21]

[21] Cited in John Paul Lederach and Angela Jill Lederach, *When Blood and Bones Cry Out: Journeys through the Soundscape of Headling and Reconciliation*, Oxford University Press, 2010.

A wellbeing perspective on societal development – or wellbeing – is not currently captured by GDP, GVA and other production-oriented aggregate measures of economic performance. Wellbeing is about more than what we produce and have. It is about what we are able to do and to be with what we have or forego: such as living long, healthy and meaningful lives, being educated, and enjoying the freedom and voice to participate in decision-making that affects our lives. This is not to suggest that income and commodities are unimportant, but that if we are concerned with wellbeing outcomes, then *we need to expand our understanding of wellbeing*. For example, we must take account of decisive factors that compromise any dimension of freedom upon which wellbeing is constructed, including inequality.

Box 3.1 Seeking Peace and Security in Northern Ireland

Submission by the Evangelical Alliance on the Programme for Government 2011-2015[22]

'An end to the separation of economic growth from a broader understanding of prosperity. Wellbeing, social capital and families must be seen as central rather than peripheral to policy debates. This will require strong and visible leadership from our politicians including a new and more holistic language and independent means of rigorously measuring progress on more than just our GDP.

i. The prioritising of wellbeing as the over-arching goal which leads to increased social mobility and the alleviation of poverty.

ii. The building of social capital as a means to creating an inclusive knowledge economy which draws in people and ideas from all social settings and sectors and invests in innovation. Recognising the vital role of social entrepreneurs and the third sector – including the faith sector – in providing social value in new and profitable ways.

iii. Better recognition of the role of the nuclear and extended family in building social capital and wellbeing – and ultimately the economy. Policies that: encourage a culture that values family relationships, enable family relationships and the exercise of responsibility within them, and relieve pressure on relationships and help people to cope with their responsibilities.'

In the context of sustainable development and the emerging need to integrate the policy implications of 'planetary boundaries',[23] including climate change, a platform for an active and participatory deliberation on an ever-evolving consensus on what constitutes wellbeing is all the more pressing. In the current era, where human activities present the most decisive influences on the fate of our ecosystems, there is a pressing need to understand wellbeing within the paradigm of 'living systems',[24] so that the continuities and inter-relationships between the integrity of individual and collective human wellbeing, values, practices, cultures, social relationships and the integrity of ecosystems can be better understood and cultivated.

[22] Northern Ireland Evangelical Alliance, Seeking *Peace and Prosperity for Northern Ireland: programme for government northern Ireland 2011-2015*, NIEA, 2011.
[23] For the latest research on the influential concept of 'ecological boundaries' go to the Stockholm Resilience Centre website: http://www.stockholmresilience.org/21/research/research-programmes/planetary-boundaries.html.
[24] Capra, F. and Luigi Luisi, P. *The Systems View of Life: A Unifying Vision*, Cambridge University Press, 2014.

3.2 Beyond Measurement, Towards a Learning Society

As wellbeing becomes ubiquitous in policy agendas, it will be important to navigate the complex set of meanings and interpretations associated with the concept. As Katherine Trebeck[25] has noted, there are multiple types of wellbeing: pleasure (hedonic wellbeing); and human flourishing (eudemonic wellbeing). The former can derive from instant gratification and spawn rampant individualism, while the latter is about accomplishment, engagement, meaning and purpose:

> *'So we need a richer, more collective notion of progress that is not muddied by multiple, contra dictory meanings and not distorted by marketing.'*[26]

The increased interest of governments in measuring populations' wellbeing – partly in recognition of the fact that gross national product per head can no longer be regarded as even an approximate measure of a population's wellbeing – demands more than measurement. Measurement does not tell us the full story in the absence of an evidence base and in-depth analyses of the determinants of health and wellbeing and of the policies required to support them. Current interest in wellbeing is a response to the challenge of deeper reflexivity in the face of complex and inter-related challenges that are at once intimate and societal.

Consider the paradigmatic example of 'zero waste' or 'cradle to cradle' production as pioneered by William McDonough and Michael Braungart[27]. For several generations the problem of 'waste' has been imagined and problematized as an inevitable feature of the linear economy, where production is imagined on a time-line that commences with design, proceeds to processes of natural resource extraction and manufacture, and results in a series of 'waste' products throughout the life of the product or service. Recycling has limited the damage, but does not ultimately address the fundamental design flaw in the economic and production system.

Box 3.2 Zero Waste – Reframing the problem and language of 'waste'

The Zero Waste concept is based on an alternative policy imaginary and trajectory, where 'waste' is ultimately designed out of the entire operating system. Grounded within an understanding of 'living systems', the circular economy model pioneered by William McDonough and Michael Braungart is based on biomimicry or producing products and services in ways that models human industry on nature's processes, viewing materials as nutrients circulating in healthy, safe metabolisms.

McDonough once said that design is the first signal of human intention. By returning to first design principles in the production and consumption process, McDonough and Braungart are providing companies and governments with the technical means to deliver very different outcomes in terms of the energy and material inputs and the elimination of waste as a problem. This could not have happened without a return to intention, first principles, language and a reimagining of the problem of 'waste' as a fundamental problem of design.

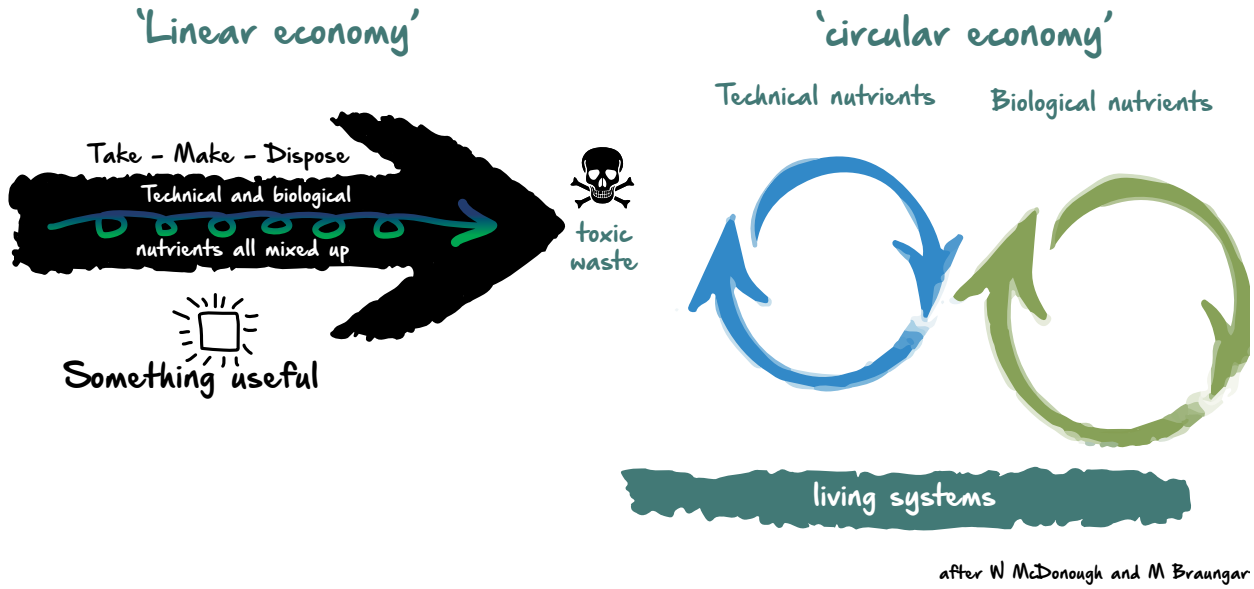
[25] Trebeck, K., *The language of Wellbeing: Bhutan and the beautician*, Measure What Matters, 2015. See: http://measurewhatmatters.info/author/katherine-trebeck/

[26] *Ibid*

[27] For more on the 'cradle to cradle' approach intrinsic to the circular economy go to: http://www.mbdc.com/

The shift to an outcomes-focused approach to wellbeing must be much more than a technocratic exercise, reduced to measurement and efficiency. Cast within a richer policy imaginary – informed perhaps by contemporary insights on 'living systems' – the shift can also lead to restorative outcomes that reconcile some of the apparent conflicts between the wellbeing of communities and their environment, and between the economy and society.

Figure 3.1: Adapted from contrasting the policy imaginaries associated with the 'linear economy' and the emergent 'circular economy' (Source: University of Bradford)



In their latest paper, the authors of the influential *The Spirit Level: Equal Societies Almost Always Do Better* (2009)[28] , Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett (2014)[29], have also continued to challenge policymakers to reimagine priorities so that wellbeing can take centre stage in organising our societies. They argue that despite historically unprecedented levels of comfort and plenty, our societies have many serious social failings and are not efficient producers of wellbeing. People experience much of life as stressful and many, particularly teenagers and young adults, are dogged by self-doubt and low self-esteem. Each year about a quarter of all adults suffer some form of mental illness – particularly depression, anxiety disorders, and drug or alcohol addiction. Prisons are overcrowded and children face high rates of bullying at school. Self-harm, particularly among teenage girls – is rife. Northern Ireland has one of the world's highest rates of anti-depressant use.

The good news, from Wilkinson and Pickett's paper on *A Convenient Truth* (2014)[30] , is that wellbeing of populations in the rich societies now depends less on further advances in material standards (for significant sections of the population) than on improving the quality of social relations and community life.

Drawing on a growing body of research evidence that makes it possible to track the deep sources

[28] Wilkinson, R. and Pickett, K., *Spirit Level: Why Equal Societies Almost Always Do Better*, Allen Lane, 2009.
[29] Wilkinson, R. and Pickett, K., *A Convenient Truth*, Fabian Society, 2014.
[30] *Ibid*

of our society's social and psychological malaise to crisis levels of self-doubt and insecurity about how we are valued, the authors underline the impact of disruption to settled communities and the resulting lives of isolation. The result is that people increasingly encounter each other as socially exposed, unknown individuals, whose worth we judge substantially from social position. Outward wealth becomes the measure of inner worth, while status and social position are assumed to be indicators of intelligence and ability.

It seems that one of the most fundamental benefits of reducing the very large differences in income and wealth which disfigures many societies, including our own, is an improvement in the quality of social relations that increases social cohesion. This suggests that Northern Irish society has much to be preserved and valued in its many towns and villages, where strong social ties continue to exist but these are often under strain due to the kinds of pressures described by Wilkinson and Pickett.

Moreover, because smaller income differences reduce the importance of status differences, they also reduce the materialism which status insecurity intensifies. This is important because consumerism is a major obstacle to sustainability. So from the perspective from both wellbeing and the environment, there are compelling arguments for replacing socially and environmentally destructive status competition with the more affiliative social relations and community life that human wellbeing requires. It is, perhaps, a mark of how these dynamics of inequality and materialism play out in complex ways in Northern Ireland to note that some young people from the Protestant and Catholic communities now associate competing brands of sportswear with their respective identities.

The Nobel Prize-winning economist, Joseph Stiglitz[31] has described how it is an impoverishment of knowledge as well as resources which impedes countries from changing their circumstances of poverty to better wellbeing and resilient economies. At the centre of this, he places learning as a most important means to advance citing the Scottish Enlightenment as a particularly good example. Individual and collective capacities for learning (and unlearning) are core contributors to wellbeing. Never more so than in today's complex world, which demands ever deeper levels of reflexivity, adaptation and resilience.

3.3 Interrupting Unhelpful Stories

In parallel with any deliberation on a new narrative, is the requirement that we recognise, understand and perhaps interrupt those existing or dominant narratives that are no longer helpful or are simply misguided (eg a linear economy, the promotion of consumerism as a proxy of a healthy economy). In the words of Peter Senge, the social or learning field of most organisations and societies remains largely unchanged because our level of attention renders it invisible.[32]

[31] Stiglitz, J. et al., *Creating a Learning Society: A New Approach to Growth, Development and Social Progress*, Columbia University Press, 2014.

[32] Senge, Peter's Foreword in Scharmer, O., *Theory U: Leading from the Future as It Emerges*, Berrett-Koehler Publishers 2009. Senge is a senior lecturer at the Sloan School of Management at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Founding Chair of the Society of Organisational Learning, a global network of people and institutions working together for systemic change. His work centres on promoting shared understanding of complex issues and shared leadership. He is the author of *The Fifth Discipline*: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization, which was recognised by Harvard Business Review as one of the seminal management books of the last 75 years, and by the *Financial Times as one of the most influential management books.*

Consider the public services research by Locality and Vanguard Consulting, in their report, *Saving Money by doing the right thing* (2014)[33], which separated out artificial demand generated only as a result of organisations not taking the right actions, and the real demand experienced by people who needed help. Artificial demand is called 'failure demand' ie demand caused by a failure to do something or do something right for the customer (Seddon, 2015)[34]. The report shows that the UK public sector is wasting millions of pounds on services that do not meet people's needs. When people's problems go unresolved, their needs remain the same or get worse, creating unnecessary demand and spiralling costs. The authors attribute much of the failure demand to two core embedded beliefs: 'economies of scale' and the 'standardisation of services'.

We do not attend to the subtle forces shaping what happens (and our intentions) because we are often too busy reacting to these forces, and limiting the scope of policy responses to incrementalist or short-term calculations. We see problems, then 'download' established mental models to both define problems and come up with solutions. Changes in efforts that arise from this limited level of attention usually focus on making changes in 'others' or in 'the system', on 'implementing' a predetermined 'change process' or in fixing some other externalised object – rarely on how 'I' or 'we' must change in order to allow the larger system to change. Senge[35] adds:

> *'The first opening arises when people truly start to recognize their own taken-for-granted assumptions and start to hear and see things that were not evident before. This is the beginning of all real learning . . .'*

When the structure of attention moves deeper, so, too, does the ensuing change process, according to Senge. The invitation to engage in a collective reflection on a narrative on wellbeing must include an inner regard ('seeing our seeing') so that collective learning is not limited to drawing lessons from the past, but open, too, to learning from an emergent future. Intuitive learning from the emergent future is vital to innovation and necessitates accommodating much greater levels of ambiguity, uncertainty, and willingness to experiment and even fail now and again. When learning over-emphasizes the 'lessons of the past', there is a risk that preferred futures are over-determined and open possibilities are foreclosed. A future is emerging that may only be possible to grasp by interrupting habitual institutionalised and personal ways of being and doing. A future is emerging that may only be possible to grasp by interrupting habitual institutionalised and personal ways of being and doing.

The process applies both locally and to important global narratives, not least those that have prevailed on the themes of 'development' and 'the economy' since the middle of the 20th century. The Czech dissident, playwright, and President, Václav Havel, summed up the global zeitgeist when he commented:

> *'I think there are good reasons for suggesting that the modern age has ended. Today, many things indicate that we are going through a transitional period, when it seems that something*

[33] Locality/Vanguard Consulting (John Seddon), *Saving money by doing the right thing*: why 'local by default' must replace 'diseconomies of scale', Vanguard, 2014.
[34] For John Seddon's work on systems thinking and 'demand failure', go to his website: http://www.systemsthinking.co.uk/home.asp
[35] Senge, Peter's Foreword in Scharmer, O, *Theory U: Leading from the Future as It Emerges, Berrett-Koehler Publishers 2009, p.xi-xviii.*

is on the way out and something else is painfully being born. It is as if something were crumbling, decaying, and exhausting itself – while something else, still indistinct, were rising from the rubble.'[36]

Not all narratives are equal. The Roundtable's interest in wellbeing as the basis for a more textured understanding of the governance and policy process taps into a wider set of ongoing conversations across the world. Debates about wellbeing, quality of life and Ecuador's *buen vivir* [37] signpost a wider set of issues about the trajectory, sustainability and role of economic models and development per se.

In large part, our interest in wellbeing goes back to the central challenge posed by the work of the *International Commission on Economic Performance Economic Performance and Social Progress* (2009)[38] . The central challenge identified by the Commission is to shift the dominant narrative that has accompanied the privileging of aggregate production-oriented measures of economic performance such as GDP (or their local equivalents). The language of wellbeing signals an international attempt to generate a new and informed conversation, one that is more inclusive of all the factors that influence our opportunities to live lives endowed with meaning and purpose.

The work of the International Commission[39] is part of a much bigger set of global conversations in which citizens and policy communities are navigating aspects of that transition to which Hável and others have referred. These big conversations can – in part – be traced back to the Club of Rome in 1968[40], when Italian industrialist Aurelio Peccei and Scottish scientist Alexander King, came together to discuss the dilemma of prevailing short-term thinking in international affairs and, in particular, the concerns regarding unlimited resource consumption in an increasingly interdependent world. The big conversations have also been driven by a series of UN conferences and conventions that followed the first truly global 'Earth Summit' in 1992, the UN Conference on Environment and Development. More recently, the Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change (2006)[41] led by economist Sir Nicholas Stern, and the former UK Sustainable Development Commission's report, *Prosperity Without Growth: the transition to a sustainable economy* (2009)[42] helped shift the terms of the debate on sustainability, climate change, the economy and the quality of economic growth.

Agreement on United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and efforts to close an agreement on a new and binding international agreement on climate change in Paris are other parts of the global conversation that will form an important part of the backdrop to our own local narrative on wellbeing.

Governments in every part of the world are coming to terms with deep social, economic and ecological transformations, in times that are also witnessing geopolitical shifts in the global balance of power leading to even more uncertainty. Not all of the most innovative responses to these dilemmas will come from governments. Grassroots responses – often facilitated by the new information and

[36] President Václav Havel, speech in Philadelphia, July 4, 1994.

[37] *The Republic of Ecuador. National Development Plan National Plan for Good Living 2009-2013: Building a Plurinational and Intercultural State*, Secretaría Nacional de Planificación y Desarrollo – SENPLADES, 2010. See: http://www.planificacion.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2012/08/versi%C3%B3n-resumida-en-ingl%C3%A9s.pdf.

[38] Stiglitz, J., Sen, A., Fitoussi, J-P *Report of the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress, CMEPSP 2009.*

[39] *Ibid*

[40] See: http://www.clubofrome.org/

[41] Stern, N. *Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change*, HM Treasury, 2006.

[42] Jackson, T. Prosperity Without Growth? Transition to a Sustainable Economy, UK Commission for Sustainable Development, 2009.

communications technologies such as the internet – contain the seeds and prototypes for emerging futures. There is an increasing imperative within the Government to enable and work alongside social, economic and environmental innovation that has origins in local communities, think tanks, and the private sector.

In policy environments marked by increasing complexity, the days of pulling policy levers at the top of government in the expectation that outcomes will fall predictably into place are receding. The structural disconnects between modern governments and their citizens (e.g. income and wealth inequalities, ecological overshoot, the breakdown in the link between consumption, health and wellbeing, and an inability to address commons-based or public goods dilemmas through the logic of markets and competition) are symptomatic of a failure by governments the world over to adapt to the complex demands of our times, both in terms of policy content and in terms of the government's orientation or relationship to the citizenry.

For example, the 'Peer-to-Peer' revolution associated with ubiquitous computing or the 'Internet of Things' (IoT)[43] is a prime example of the social innovation that is being led from the ground up. Jeremy Rifkin anticipates the emergence of a 'social' or 'collaborative' commons advancing the practices of open-source innovation, transparency, and the search for community, a transition that will see entirely new measures of economic value taking the place of GDP:

> *'The Internet of Things is the technological "soul mate" of an emerging Collaborative Commons. The new infrastructure is configured to be distributed in nature in order to facilitate collaboration and the search for synergies, making it an ideal technological framework for advancing the social economy.'*[44]

Noting the introduction of new metrics for determining economic progress emphasising quality of life indicators rather than merely the quantity of economic output, at the European Union, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and in a number of industrialised and developing countries, Rifkin (2014)[45] anticipates a gradual decline in the significance of the GDP metric and the emergence of quality-of-life indices linked to the rise of a Collaborative Commons as the litmus test for measuring the economic wellbeing of all nations by mid-century.

Box 3.3 The Internet of Things

Jeremy Rifkin, Foundation on Economic Trends, a leading thinker and advisor to the European Union, anticipates the day when the Internet of Things will connect everything with everyone in an integrated global network. People, machines, natural resources, production lines, logistics networks, consumption habits, recycling flows, and virtually every other aspect of economic and social life will be linked via sensors and software to the IoT platform, with dramatic implications for productivity and the marginal cost of producing and delivering a full range of goods and services.

[43] See, for example, the European Research Cluster on the Internet of Things funded under the European Commission 7th Framework Programme. http://www.internet-of-things-research.eu/about_ierc.htm

[44] Rifkin, Jeremy, 2014, *The Zero Marginal Cost Society: The Internet of Things, the Collaborative Commons and the Eclipse of Capitalism*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.11, 18.

[45] *Ibid.*

Otto Scharmer and Katrin Kaufer (2014)[46] have charted the evolution of four stages or paradigms of economic thought that have shaped our societies and government responses:

- The state-centric model, characterised by co-ordination through hierarchy and control in a single-sector society;
- The free market model, characterised by the rise of a second (private) sector and co-ordinated through the mechanisms of marked and competition;
- The social-market model, characterised by the rise of a third (NGO) sector and by negotiated co-ordination among organised interest groups; and
- The co-creative eco-system model, characterised by the rise of a fourth sector that creates platforms and holds the space for cross-sector innovation that engages stakeholders from all sectors.

Indeed, we may be witnessing the emergence of an entirely new mode of societal organisation that evolves away from the competitive market state and centrally-planned systems. It is based on the practices and needs of civil society and the environment it inhabits at the local, regional, national and global levels. Robin Murray, an industrial economist with The Young Foundation and the London School of Economics, has argued that the early years of the 21st century are witnessing the emergence of a new kind of economy that has profound implications for the future of public services as well as for the daily life of citizens. This emerging economy can be seen in many fields, including the environment, care, education, welfare, food and energy. It combines some old elements and many new ones. Murray outlines the key features of the new 'social' or collaborative economy[47] – features that resonate deeply within Northern Ireland's third sector:

- The intensive use of distributed networks to sustain and manage relationships, helped by broadband, mobile and other means of communication;
- Blurred boundaries between production and consumption;
- An emphasis on collaboration and on repeated interactions, care and maintenance rather than one-off consumption; and
- A strong role for values and missions.

Murray believes that this emergent paradigm can be found in parts of the public sector, the non-profit world as well as commercial markets, and thrives where these sectors overlap. Intriguingly, it is already helping to address some of the most intractable problems facing modern societies, including adaptation to climate change, ageing, inequality, and spreading learning. Murray observes that the current financial crisis has added urgency to these emerging alternatives. The immediate responses to the downturn emphasised the monetary dimensions of the crisis – restoring flows of credit and finance. He continues:

'But the current crisis is not simply one of the banking system, and the destabilisation of the macro-economy that has followed from it. It is a crisis of the real economy, of an old form of production

[46] Scharmer, O., and Kaufer, K., *Leading from the Emerging Future: From Ego-System to Eco-System*, Berrett-Koehler, 2013.

[47] Murray, R., *Danger and Crisis: Crisis and the new social economy*, Young Foundation/NESTA, 2009. For a list of Robin Murray's publications on social innovation and the transformation of the social economy go to: http://youngfoundation.org/people/robin-murray/

and consumption, of its sources of energy and its means of transportation. Longer-term changes in technology are the context for the financial crisis, and pose a whole set of questions for the possibility and character of any recovery. The current crisis, like that of the 1930s, is the hinge between an old world and a new one. Such crises, as the Austrian economist Joseph Schumpeter pointed out, are periods of creation and destruction.' (Murray, 2009, p.5)

In Figure 3.2, John Seddon, who applies systems thinking in his work on organisational change, draws a number of contrasts between 'command-and-control thinking' associated with conventional organisations, and the approaches associated with 'systems thinking'.

Figure 3.2 Systems Thinking (The Vanguard Method associated with the work of John Seddon)[48]:

Command-and-Control Thinking		**Systems Thinking**
Top-down hierarchy	**Perspective**	Outside-in system
Functional specialisation and procedures	**Design of work**	Demand, value and flow
Contractual	**Attitude to customers**	What matters?
Separated from work	**Decision-making**	Integrated with work
Output, targets, activity, standards: Related to budget	**Measurement**	Capability, variation: Related to purpose
Contractual	**Attitude to suppliers**	Co-operative
Control budgets, manage people	**Management ethos**	Learn through action on the system
Extrinsic	**Assumptions about motivation**	Intrinsic

3.4 Viable narrative

Among the key findings in the European BRAINPOol (2014)[49] research was the need for the development of a compelling narrative to underpin indicators. The story must be politically viable and provide a coherent explanation of how the world works, and thus a basis for making policy. In the absence of such a narrative, new indicators and approaches are either rejected, or are simply laid on top of existing policy narratives and thus lead to little or no change to the *status quo*. There is no shortage of competing narratives – and narrative fragments.

Specifically, the BRAINPOol (2014) research raised a number of important questions about the role of narrative in the context of moving beyond GDP:

- A narrative is more than a slogan – it is an explanation (often implicit) of the way the world is;
- A narrative is not the same as an economic theory, but it needs to be at least consistent with a theory, not least because it will need to attract the endorsement of commentators in the press;

[48] Our thanks to John Seddon for permission to reproduce his table. See the work of John Seddon and The Vanguard team at: https://www.vanguard-method.com/

[49] Whitby, A (WFC) et al., 'BRAINPOoL Project Final Report: Beyond GDP – From Measurement to Politics and Policy', BRAINPOoL deliverable 5.2, A collaborative programme funded by the European Union's Seventh Programme for research, technological development and demonstration under grant agreement No. 283024 WFC (World Future Council), 31 March 2014.

- The most effective narratives also provide guidance to officials, simplifying assumptions that make the job easier;
- The dominance of GDP is difficult to challenge in part because it is directly associated with a dominant narrative: the credibility of the indicator and of the narrative are mutually reinforcing. To compete beyond GDP, wellbeing indicators need to offer a compelling alternative – one which is clearly not just what it is against, but also what it is for, and the route to get there.

In turn, the research explores some of the 'building blocks' that might inform alternative narratives:

> *'Beyond GDP or wellbeing has too often been linked to politically weak messages around "happiness" or "environmental limits", and is seen by policy makers as lacking a theoretical foundation to compete with the strong neoclassical narrative which underpins GDP. These are two pillars of the same problem: proponents of GDP must articulate a clearer and more compelling alternative story about economic progress and the role of policy in achieving it.*
>
> *In relation to labour market policy, a wellbeing approach could be framed in terms of good, secure jobs, greater equality, and decent living standards for all – emphasizing that we cannot rely on markets and growth to deliver these outcomes, and that government policy can and should shape them for the better. A wellbeing approach would recognise that our quality of life is not just about what we consume but also about good work, dignity and good social relations.*
>
> *In relation to the green economy, sustainability approaches could be framed in terms of quality of life now and in the future, and security for the long-term. They might argue that the 2008 crash shows the pursuit of growth at any cost produces instability and inequality without making most people better off, and that economic policy should prioritise stability and security – including environmental security – instead of risky growth.'*

The New Economics Foundation added that successful policy narratives must be context-specific.

In the current harsh economic climate, caution has to be exercised in framing a narrative and set of messages around wellbeing. As one editorial in The Independent newspaper put it:

> *'. . . arguments about "non-material" wealth could be used as an alibi for the growing divide between rich and poor and to suggest that poverty not only doesn't matter but doesn't even exist.'* (The Independent, Editorial, May 18, 2014)

The influence of the dominant economic story was reflected in comments from a number of stakeholders who contributed to our process. There was concern that 'neo-liberal economic orthodoxies' dominate to the exclusion of the important role of individuals and communities in 'making meaning', embracing 'values' and constructing their own stories around a 'holistic' vision

of wellbeing. Some placed great emphasis on the importance of the individual and community experience where wellbeing and the inner life come together.

Ill-being derives from significant inequalities and forms of exclusion especially where these interface with long-standing grievances to exacerbate problems of community cohesion. A tougher economic climate can add to the intractability of these problems.

The recommendations of Scotland's Commission on the Future Delivery of Public Services has much to be commended as elements in a new narrative for Northern Ireland's approach to wellbeing, notably in the context of local government reform. A key message in the report applies equally to today's local political and economic context. To paraphrase: 'Unless Northern Ireland embraces a radical, new, collaborative culture throughout our public services, both budgets and provision will buckle under the strain.' Significantly, the Christie Commission[50] showed how persistent inequalities were responsible for increasing demands on public services. A cycle of deprivation and low aspiration has been allowed to persist because preventative measures have not been prioritised. Preventative measures must be a key objective of public service reform.

[50] Christie, C, *Commission on the Future Delivery of Public Services*, Scottish Government, 2010.

4. Cultivating Wellbeing on the Journey out of Conflict

The Roundtable views the Wellbeing Framework as an important communication tool or platform to support a step change in the nature and quality of societal learning, evidence-based policy analyses, policy design and co-production. A new whole-of-government operational culture based on collaborative problem solving will require considerable capacity building to support both enhanced levels of policy deliberation, experimentation and an openness to engagement with new sets of participants (globally and locally) – from design (ie co-design) through to delivery and implementation. The launch of the Northern Ireland Open Government Network is an encouraging sign that this dimension of the societal wellbeing conversation is well under way.

The capacity building will require novel elements which, in themselves, contribute to qualities of mind and practice consistent with wellbeing, including intuition, open minds, empathy, and creativity. In terms of learning environments much can be learned from the new technology companies, with their campus-style headquarters, close attention to learning cultures, the facilitation of mindfulness among staff, and an emphasis on horizontal and dynamic roles and structures that enable cross-fertilisation from across the organization. In the course of the Roundtable's engagement with parts of government one of the most striking observations has been the level of consensus that already exists around the need for 'the system' to facilitate – provide cues for – more collaborative working practices. Due to a series of communicative lapses, however, participants in the public sector are not yet receiving the cues and mandates that will encourage the systems thinking required of a government functioning as a single organisation, and in close collaboration with local government.

4.1 Making Connections

In a post-conflict society, much is at stake in the design and delivery of policy. There are risks for all of us when public confidence falls away from systems of governance and a disconnect between politics and the lives of citizens is allowed to replace an enlivened sense of ownership, accountability and engagement[51]. Every negative perception of governance – expressed as concerns about security, welfare, social exclusion, health or budgeting – carries the weight of a deeper possibility: a crisis in the implicit social contract or understanding between government and citizen, with all of the risks that entails for a society journeying out of enmity.

Narratives are centrally about a sense of purpose and meaning. One stakeholder told the Roundtable consultation: *'We want to make meaning and to construct our own stories. Values are critical. Wellbeing and the inner life are connected at individual and collective levels.'* Narratives are not necessarily about settling issues, but can assist the process of 'gathering a consensus'[52]. They invite us to reach for a common language even while we acknowledge that there is never an easy consensus across the range of interests and values present in our society.

In Scotland, by placing an outcomes-focused performance framework at the heart of measures of

[51] See Lucid Talk Polling commissioned by the Belfast Telegraph: http://www.lucidtalk.co.uk/. Recent polling suggests that the so called political class enjoy a -40 approval rating, with only 9% of those polled approving of their performance. Results viewed October 8, 2014.
See Belfast Telegraph editorial: http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/debateni/blogs/stormont-poll-put-this-mockery-of-democracy-out-of-its-misery-right-now-30633671.html

[52] Carnegie Roundtable II deliberations.

progress, a shared understanding of what matters that cuts across political boundaries, has begun to have an impact. The Scottish Performance Unit informed our Roundtable that *'Focusing on an agreed set of shared outcomes provides a space where party differences can be put aside for the good of achieving common goals.'*[53] The origins of the Scottish decision lay in a deep political challenge where the governing party failed to command a working majority. The political choice confronting the minority government was *'to do business or have chaos'?*

Wellbeing will be best understood as an organising principle for far-reaching policy and institutional reform and responses to the immediate challenges at all levels of governance, notably the extension of powers to local government and community planning. In developing new patterns of service provision, public service organisations should increasingly develop and adopt positive approaches which build services around people and communities, their needs, aspirations, capacities and skills, and work to build up their autonomy and resilience. There is a significant role for reformed local government in facilitating a new 'place-based' dimension of the wellbeing narrative, with a view to enhancing meaningful civic engagement through funded community-planning processes.

4.2 'Trauma Time'

Wellbeing in Northern Ireland is viewed or mediated, for the most part, through the lens of two prevailing narratives about the role of our democratic institutions. These narratives reflect the two primary functions of democratic institutions in a post-conflict society and remain in play:

i. One is to institutionalise accommodation and deepen a democratic culture of engagement and compromise;
ii. The second, and related function, is the conventional delivery of or support for social, economic and sustainable progress. This latter narrative is centrally concerned with a deeply embedded view of the economy as a chief driver of the conditions that support social progress. As we have noted, the relationship between patterns of economic growth and wellbeing is highly mediated by levels of equality and other factors.

Box 4.1 The Bridge of Hope – a wellbeing centre in North Belfast

The Bridge of Hope was founded in 2001 and is a community-based victims and survivors service that works with individuals, families and communities affected by the conflict in North Belfast and beyond.

The aim of the service is to tackle the legacy of the conflict through a variety of holistic approaches to trauma recovery. This is done through the delivery of complementary therapies, legacy and conflict analysis, as well as accredited training and personal development courses geared at managing and reducing stress, learning how to relax and ways in which to boost confidence levels.

The Bridge of Hope also works extensively with other community, voluntary and statutory organisations to meet the emotional, physical, mental and spiritual healing of people.

[53] Submission to call for evidence by Roundtable, from the Performance Unit, Scottish Government. The political origins of Scotland's Performance Framework, in the context of the SNP-led minority administration in 2007, are also suggestive of a contributory function for such a framework in the context of Northern Ireland's mandatory coalition.

The potential strength of wellbeing is its ability to capture the economic and non-economic dimensions that contribute to the freedoms or capabilities that underpin valued lives (in all their being and doing) and how these dimensions interact (eg economic inequality and deprivation can interact with the deeply embedded experience of exclusion in parts of our society, and reinforce perceptions of discrimination).

There may be opportunities to align our primary narratives about the purpose of democratic institutions. Wellbeing, understood within a capability approach, presents an interesting language to engage with those capabilities that will help deepen an enabling democratic culture of emergence, democratic reasoning and non-violent communication (NVC) just as a new emphasis is also placed on the conventional outcomes we have come to expect from government in areas such as wealth creation and tackling inequalities.

In her submission to the Roundtable on Equality and Wellbeing in Northern Ireland, Lisa Wilson of Queens University detailed evidence on the extent of income inequality within Northern Ireland and demonstrated how it is one of the most unequal regions in the developed world. She concluded that: *'In a Northern Ireland context then, when we take into consideration the high level of income inequality alongside a stubbornly stagnant economy, continuing divisions and segregated communities, rising levels of poverty and deprivation, and evidence of health inequalities between social groups, it becomes clear that if we want to improve our well-being we should be aiming for a less unequal society.'*

She recommends that income inequality is an issue that needs to be at the heart of any outcomes focused approach to wellbeing.

In the post-conflict context, wellbeing is also linked to enhanced levels of political agency, autonomy and embedding a culture of democratic deliberation. Wellbeing is both an end and a means in the context of conflict resolution. The deep suffering that has afflicted so many people in our post-conflict society continues to issue a profound challenge on the journey out of enmity and into an era of trust building and co-authorship in a spirit of emergence.

At the first meeting of the Roundtable, considerable attention was given over to the traumatic impact of the conflict and the consequences for levels of mental health and addiction. For the international relations writer and theorist, Jenny Edkins, and former Queens University Belfast scholar, Rebecca Graff-McRae (Graff-McRae, 2010)[54] , traumas such as societal conflict can generate a specific political experience of time called 'trauma time' as opposed to the 'linear time' of the normalised or institutionalised political state of continuity and collective consensus. 'Trauma time' refers to a political moment of narrative disruption, an exceptional political period marked by a demand for a new account or explanation that accommodates and bestows meaning on the immediate past in relation to the present and the future.

[54] Graff-McRae, R, Remembering and Forgetting 1916: Commemoration and Conflict in Post-Peace Process Ireland, Irish Academic Press, 2010, pp. 11-12.

A study by the Princes Trust found that over one-in-three (35%) youngsters in Northern Ireland had experienced mental health issues, compared to a UK national average of almost one-in-five (19%). It also revealed that long-term unemployed 16-25-year-olds are twice as likely as their peers to have been prescribed anti-depressants, and believe they have nothing to live for. Ian Jeffers, director of the Trust, said at the time: 'Unemployment is proven to cause devastating, long-lasting mental health problems among young people.' (Belfast Telegraph, January 2, 2014)

The Roundtable heard from contributors who linked the fall-out from the conflict to ill-being in our communities. The post-conflict context was linked to contemporary experiences of trauma, addiction, self-harm and suicide and our collective incapacity to complete the journey out of enmity.

Growing levels of child poverty, poor educational outcomes and a high incidence of underachievement, stubborn and consistently-high levels of economic inactivity, including disproportionately high levels of youth unemployment, interact in complex ways with and are exacerbated by a decline in community relations.

Research conducted by Professor Mike Tomlinson at Queens University Belfast, has linked the increase in suicide in Northern Ireland to the legacy of 'The Troubles', with a key finding that the cohort of children and young people who grew up in the worst years of violence, during the 1970s, recorded the highest and most rapidly increasing suicide rates, and account for a steep upward trend in suicide following the 1998 Agreement (Tomlinson and Kelly, 2013)[55]. Tomlinson's findings are reinforced in a survey by the University of Ulster. The survey results state: *'The highest odds ratios for all suicidal behaviours were for people with any mental disorder. However, the odds of seriously considering suicide were significantly higher for people with conflict and non-conflict-related traumatic events compared with people who had not experienced a traumatic event.'*[56]

[55] Tomlinson, M.W. and Kelly, G.P. 'Is Everybody Happy? The politics and measurement of national wellbeing', Policy and Politics, Vol. 41, No. 2, 04 2013

[56] O'Neill S., Ferry F., Murphy S., Corry C., Bolton D., et al. (2014) Patterns of Suicidal Ideation and Behavior in Northern Ireland and Associations with Conflict Related Trauma. PLoS ONE 9(3): e91532. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0091532, cited in Nolan, P, *Peace Monitoring Report No. 3*, Northern Ireland Community Relations Council, 2014, p.111.

Box 4.2: Reflections from Justine Brown: Health and Wellbeing Development Worker, North Belfast Partnership

Threaded throughout my work from 2005 has been a particular interest in using mindfulness based approaches and practices in working with others. Over my time working in the field of community development, I have observed how many people (myself included) have become over extended and under pressure due to raised expectations, stress and secondary trauma. I have endeavoured to design and facilitate various training/workshops focussing on the likes of frontline mindfulness/yoga and meditation/life coaching in order to provide support to help develop personal and professional capacity and resilience in order to support the people we work with.

Case Study: Frontline Mindfulness Training

This training is for community-based workers who want to learn new skills to help people recovering from extremely stressful life events; including primary and secondary trauma. This training is useful for workers who want to broaden their self-knowledge, gain tools for developing personal self-care, and cultivate skills that contribute to increased inner strength, and greater physical, emotional, and mental wellbeing.

Personal Ownership of Self-Care:
Through practices that center around self-care, individuals are able to build personal resilience and inner strength. By extension, they are better able to act as compassionate, thoughtful workers/leaders and share these tools with others, strengthening families and communities in ways that are deeply transformative, and deeply healing. These simple practices build elements of resiliency in each person, and lead to more thoughtful, effective action in all facets of life.

Training Objectives:
This training explores four facets of practical mindfulness, with a particular focus on self-care and its utility in community, social services and caregiving professions.

The broad goal of this training is to nurture wellness among all those who serve, so we can have the greatest personal resources possible to offer your clients.

There are four specific objectives:

- cultivating tools for stress-reduction, emotional regulation, and long-term self-care
- developing internal resiliency – the power to ‘bounce back’ from trauma or chaos
- building awareness of our needs and motivations at any given moment
- encouraging compassionate communication within families, across community divides, and with oneself, to foster the creation of trusting, safe, and fulfilling relationships.

5. Towards a Wellbeing Framework

5.1 A Living Framework

'Measuring the progress of societies . . . has become fundamental for development and policymaking in general. Improving the quality of our lives should be the ultimate target of public policies.' (Angel Gurria, Secretary-General, OECD[57])

In the Carnegie UK Trust report, *Measuring Wellbeing in Northern Ireland: a new conversation for new times*,[58] the authors noted that as local politicians seek to steer the economy in a direction that services the common good in challenging times – it will be more important than ever to design policies and enable actors in a way that accurately anticipates impacts on wellbeing, builds resilience, and reflects critical links between Northern Ireland's wellbeing agenda and the interdependent concerns of sustainable economic activity and political stability.

During the course of the Roundtable's deliberations and a series of stakeholder engagements, the Report's assertion that there are significant opportunities to embed an outcomes-focused wellbeing agenda across the region's administration has been more than vindicated.

Consider these responses to our call for evidence:

> *'We agree that wellbeing has value as a focus for policy makers because it relates directly to outcomes for citizens, provides a common framework within which different objectives and perspectives can be discussed, and "lends itself to a rethinking of policy design, processing and engagement.". We also agree that focusing on wellbeing is a useful response to growing recognition of the need for new measures and visions of societal progress in light of current economic and ecological challenges – the "Beyond GDP" debate.'* (The New Economics Foundation)

> *'Belfast Healthy Cities supports an outcomes approach. The [NI] Executive should aspire to having a set of wellbeing indicators which underpins the work of all priorities of the Programme for Government. This may involve a programme of capacity building to increase awareness of how wellbeing is impacted and promoted through all policies. The transfer of community planning powers provides local government with an opportunity to strategically shape and influence the wellbeing of local neighbourhoods.'* (Belfast Healthy Cities)

> *'. . . a wellbeing focus can help empower citizens and strengthen processes of democratisation as wellbeing is something that can only be truly achieved with us and not for us . . .'* (Dr Elke Heins, Good Lives and Decent Societies, Edinburgh)

[57] OECD Wellbeing and Social Progress, 2013.

[58] Carnegie UK Trust report, Measuring Wellbeing in Northern Ireland: a new conversation for new times (2014)

Innovative and complementary work – in many cases anticipating the insights and approaches associated with an outcomes-focused wellbeing framework - is being conducted in the new Public sector Reform Division within the Department of Finance and Personnel, in the ongoing development of the OFMDFM's Delivering Social Change[59] framework and within the Executive's core commitments to peace, fairness, equality, good relations, prosperity and wellbeing. A significant leadership role is also anticipated in the context of local government reform and community planning, where there is a compelling case for collaboration and an alignment of priorities and outcomes. Initiatives such as Inspiring Impact and the Building Change Trust's initiative on the Open Government Network also underpin an emerging language within civil society, one that holds the promise of supporting a newly-vibrant democratic conversation.

While 'measurement' is an important dimension of the debate on moving beyond aggregate measures of productivity as a proxy for wellbeing, and on the need for a more comprehensive informational platform to understand the determinants of wellbeing in our society, the Roundtable's deliberations reflected a key insight: any framework for wellbeing must be a living process that resonates deeply with the priorities, the places, the practices and dreams of local citizens where they live. There have been few debates on street corners or in television studios about the merits and demerits of alternative approaches to measuring policy outcomes or indicators. What is evident across the administration and civil society, however, is a desire to reconnect the business of government with societal change that impacts on real lives. In many ways, we found people across government expressing views quite similar to those on the eve of the introduction of Scotland's National Performance Framework ('Scotland Performs'). At that time, there was an organisational psychology with a disconnect between 'what we knew and what we did', so the changes brought about in the Scottish governmental system was not about unique or brilliant policy insights, rather it was more about tackling a failure to operationalise.

A cornerstone of the Wellbeing Framework will be a commitment to an on-going conversation, with the participation of all sections of civil society, cultural actors, the private sector and beyond. The *Bringing Alternative Indicators Into Policy* (BRAINPOoL, March 2014) research, commissioned by the EU, has noted the important impact of civil society on the current debate about measures of social progress and called for civil society to play a more central role in any future debates about what 'social progress' or a 'good life' actually mean and the types of measures we use.

Executive departments to drive through initiatives which have a genuine impact on the ground. The framework aims to deliver a sustained reduction in poverty and associated issues across all ages and to improve children and young people's health, wellbeing and life opportunities, thereby breaking the long-term cycle of multi-generational problems. Delivering Social Change is a new way of doing business, moving away from plans with long lists of existing activities towards a smaller number of actions which can really make a difference. It is about creating a new culture and focus on cross-cutting work to achieve social benefits. It is not about replacing ongoing work happening in Government departments, but is instead about adding to this work.

A UK initiative designed to invite the community and voluntary sector and their funders to rethink their approaches to impact. See: http://inspiringimpactni.org/. The NI programme is hosted by the Building Change Trust.

[59] The Delivering Social Change framework was set up by the Northern Ireland Executive to tackle poverty and social exclusion. It represents a new level of joined-up working by Ministers and senior officials across

Box 5.1: Inspiring Impact NI

Inspiring Impact is a UK-wide initiative that aims to change the way voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations and their funders think about impact and to put impact practice at the heart of their work by 2022.

Impact Practice is more than just measurement; it is also about planning for impact, learning from and using impact data to effect change. The initiative is building capacity in the VCSE to encourage organisations to ensure that 'making a difference' becomes a core responsibility, supported by a focus on purpose, collaboration, appropriate methods and resources, honesty and openness, a readiness to learn and adapt to findings, and active sharing and learning.

In a remarkably prescient observation, the Irish sociologist, John Maguire, summed up the dilemma when he observed that it is impossible to maintain that in some very important way, we do not 'know' about our problems. What often prevents us from pursuing appropriate action and such knowledge is not plausibly a lack of data. It is much more centrally a failure to integrate the data and information. It is much more centrally a failure to make the knowledge real to ourselves, to give them the proper frame.

That's why our proposed Framework is much more than an attempt to capture and share information. Our era is confronted less by the demand to measure and more to understand. The proposed Framework is a platform, a process, a way of engagement and much more. It is a communications process designed to support the emergence of a 'learning society', much more agile and inclusive in the co-design and deliberation of policy options, insightful with regard to the difficult trade-offs that accompany policy choices, and creatively engaged with the world of ideas and deep social trends locally and globally. A Wellbeing Framework can provide a single point of reference to which all public services and partners are aligned. **It can become part of a transformative shift in how policy is made, and a key enabler of public service reform**. By aligning the whole public sector around a common set of goals – that have been the subject of public deliberation, even contestation – government can deliver lasting collaboration and partnership working. Organisations across the community, including local government and community planning partnerships, can begin to work towards shared goals defined in terms of benefits to citizens, tailored to local places, rather than simply efficient service delivery.

The integrity of the Framework is underpinned by independently verified data and indicators translated into an accessible dashboard, which provides virtually real-time feedback and learning about our progress across policy areas and about those areas where more needs to be done. The Roundtable's findings have been in line with the latest international evidence, showing that to

achieve credibility and longevity, wellbeing dashboards must measure **what matters to people**, must engage with people in the process and must communicate effectively on progress. This implies both qualitative and quantitative forms of consultation. We are also recommending an investment in the most advanced data visualisation techniques accompanied by social media strategies as part of a communications strategy for the Framework.

The alternative can impose both human and financial costs. Habitual and institutionalised responses can produce results that nobody wants and unintended outcomes. A recent report by *Locality and Vanguard Consulting , Saving Money By Doing the Right Thing*[61] has claimed that the UK public sector is wasting millions of pounds on services that do not meet people's needs. When people's problems go unresolved, their needs remain the same or get worse, creating unnecessary demand and spiralling costs. Most surprising among the findings was that real demand for most public services is not rising. The report's authors found that it is the artificial demand, created and amplified by organisations themselves, which is rising. Drawing on experience from the Netherlands, the report shows that understanding demand in human terms and providing the means for self-help are universal principles for effective and low cost services.

5.2 The Scottish Experience

The Roundtable has looked closely at the Scottish experience with the Scottish Government's *Scotland Performs* national performance framework and measurement set. This is the nearest – but not the only – comparator for a Wellbeing Framework in Northern Ireland. It may be valuable, by way of introduction, to set the Scottish experience in context[62]. Professor Joseph Stiglitz, International Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress, has described the Scottish performance framework as one of the most recent 'success stories' in wellbeing measurement.

> *'The Scottish approach is concerned with matters of resilience and control. What can we do to make it more likely that individuals and families in poverty and in communities under pressure can, by drawing on and strengthening their own assets, experience wellbeing and exercise control in their lives?'* (Sir Peter Housden, Permanent Secretary, Scottish Government)

With roots in the formation of a minority administration in 2007, *Scotland Performs* emerged as part of an innovative Scottish model of government developed in partnership between the Civil Service and the political leadership, building on the learning from the earlier period of devolution. The innovation is based on an effort to have government function as a single organisation, working towards a single defined government purpose based on outcomes, and establishing a partnership based on that purpose with the rest of the public sector, which is capable of being joined by other parts of civil society.

[61] Locality/Vanguard Consulting (John Seddon), *Saving money by doing the right thing: why 'local by default'* must replace 'diseconomies of scale', Vanguard 2014.

[62] This account is taken from Sir John Elvidge's 2011 paper, *Northern Exposure: Lessons from the first twelve years of devolved government in Scotland.* Published by the Institute for Government in the *InsideOUT series of personal perspectives on government effectiveness.*

Sir John Elvidge, who served as Permanent Secretary to the Scottish Government from July, 2003, until June, 2010, describes how the Scottish model rests *'on an ambitious conception of what is achievable through such a partnership between the public sector and civil society. It places strategic leadership and the facilitation of co-operation between organisations and sections of society at the heart of the role of Central Government, rather than a managerialist view of the relationship of central government to others.'*[63] In Scotland's case, this has extended to an explicit rejection of departmentalism as a basis for effective government.

Ahead of the 2007 Scottish Election, separate, but convergent, political and Civil Service analyses came together to produce the new approach to government. The Scottish National Party's thinking in advance of the election had led them to include in their manifesto commitments to:

i. An outcomes-based approach to the framing of the objectives of government and to enabling the electorate to hold the Government to account for performance;
ii. A reduced size of Cabinet, which was an expression of a commitment to an approach to Ministerial responsibilities that emphasised the collective pursuit of shared objectives over a focus on individual portfolios with disaggregated objectives.

Over several years, Elvidge had become increasingly focused on the intractability of several problems with major social and economic impacts: educational outcomes for the least successful 20 % of young people; health inequalities related to socio-economic background; geographical concentrations of economically unsuccessful households; and Scotland's relatively-weak GDP growth. He writes: *'These problems had in common that they had been the sustained focus of policy interventions of various kinds, over several decades and often accompanied by substantial public expenditure, but had either remained unchanged or deteriorated.'*[64]

Work on future scenarios for Scotland's society and economy seemed to demonstrate that conventional policy approaches and operational solutions would have little positive impact. The Scottish Government Strategy Unit and top civil servants began to study the lessons from those policy areas in which more integrated approaches to policy, such as children's early years, and to apply the lessons in other areas such as health inequalities and the rising prison population.

There are close parallels in the innovative work undertaken in Northern Ireland under the OFMDFM's *Delivering Social Change* (DSC) initiative, which has already begun to impact in areas such as literacy. In many ways the Roundtable's proposals for a Wellbeing Framework, with its focus on an outcomes approach, is an invitation to scale up the learning and operational approaches already prototyped at project level in initiatives such as the DSC.

[63] Ibid
[64] Ibid

Box 5.2 Justice and Delivering Social Change in Northern Ireland

Consider the scope, for example, to relieve both the human and financial costs of a whole-of-government approach to justice. Inspired by the OFMDFM DSC initiative, one paper has noted the paradoxical challenges: crime is falling yet the prison population and the fear of crime are both rising. And citizens are demanding a more effective system at a time when resources are reducing.

The paper identifies the opportunity to reframe the justice challenges within the delivery of social change and the possibility of adopting a more preventive approach to crime by intervening more effectively across the governmental system in the social dimensions of crime.

The holistic approach to social policy signalled by the DSC initiative is identified as an opportunity to start a new conversation, within and beyond the justice system and the Executive Departments: *'We know the issues that we need to tackle, and the places where these issues are most acute, and yet change is not happening in line with our ambitions.'* Proposing a more systemic approach, the paper concedes that justice interventions often come at the point where other social interventions have not worked. The state fulfils the role of pulling people from the river, when it would make more sense to go upstream and prevent them falling in the first place.

'Perhaps part of our role is to enable a shift in the social contract, a recalibration of the role of the state and the role of the citizen, requiring behaviour change from both the state (and the individuals who work within it) and the citizen to varying degrees. The role of government is more than the transactional delivery of services; it is about bringing about social change and supporting our community to be more resilient and successful. Delivering Social Change has the potential to connect individual organisations and their statutory functions to a wider strategy, in a way that elevates and enhances our individual missions.' (DoJ NI, *Delivering Social Change*, November, 2013)

In Scotland, Elvidge reached two main conclusions with regard to a shift in approach to policy making and operational delivery:

- First, that the Scottish administration was not exploring sufficiently the potential benefits of being able to address the wide range of responsibilities within a relatively compact central government structure, which had close working relationships with local government and the voluntary sector as well as with its own extensive range of NDPBs and Executive Agencies.
- Second, that the strong emphasis on separate policy domains in the organisational structures of government was an obstacle to improvement.

Consequently, Elvidge developed a proposal for the abolition of an organisational structure of Departments and a redefinition of the roles of the former Heads of Departments, building on other features of the existing organisational arrangements to create a stronger sense of a single coherent organisation, including a unified financial accountability office at the top level of government and the development of a corporate Board for senior staff. His approach converged with the SNP plans. As former First Minister Alex Salmond stated shortly after the 2007 election:

> *'We have slimmed down the Government from nine departments to six, thereby delivering a welcome reduction in the cost of the ministerial team. Government will be strategically focused, with five Cabinet secretaries, supported by 10 ministers . . .Our aim is to break down the boundaries and barriers that exist in Government, which can often hinder the most effective strategic outcomes and a focused approach. The realignment of the Cabinet is therefore matched with a restructuring of the senior civil service. Our Cabinet team will work alongside a new strategic board, so that the Government as a whole pulls in the same direction.'*

Salmond went on to explain that his then deputy, Nicola Sturgeon MSP, would lead on health and wellbeing, with an expanded portfolio to include not only the health service and public health, but wider social policy, sport, deprivation and housing. Public sector activity was reorganised around the five high level policy outcomes identified in the performance framework:

- Wealthier and fairer
- Healthier
- Safer and Stronger
- Smarter
- Greener.

The key features of the Scottish model of government as a single organisation:

- An outcomes-based approach to delivering the objectives of government;
- A single statement of purpose, elaborated into a supporting structure of a smallnumber of broad objectives and a larger, but still limited, number of measurable national outcomes;
- A system for tracking performance against outcomes and reporting it transparently and accessibly;
- Single leadership roles controlling each of the political and Civil Service pillars of government, supported by small senior teams;
- Understandings of the roles of the members of the senior political and Civil Service teams which give primacy to contributing to the collective objectives of the team.

Elvidge makes a number of observations that are pertinent for the proposals for Northern Ireland. First, the Scottish model derives primarily from thinking about the effectiveness of the Government, and from learning drawn from experience. It is an example of form following function. Second, it is a

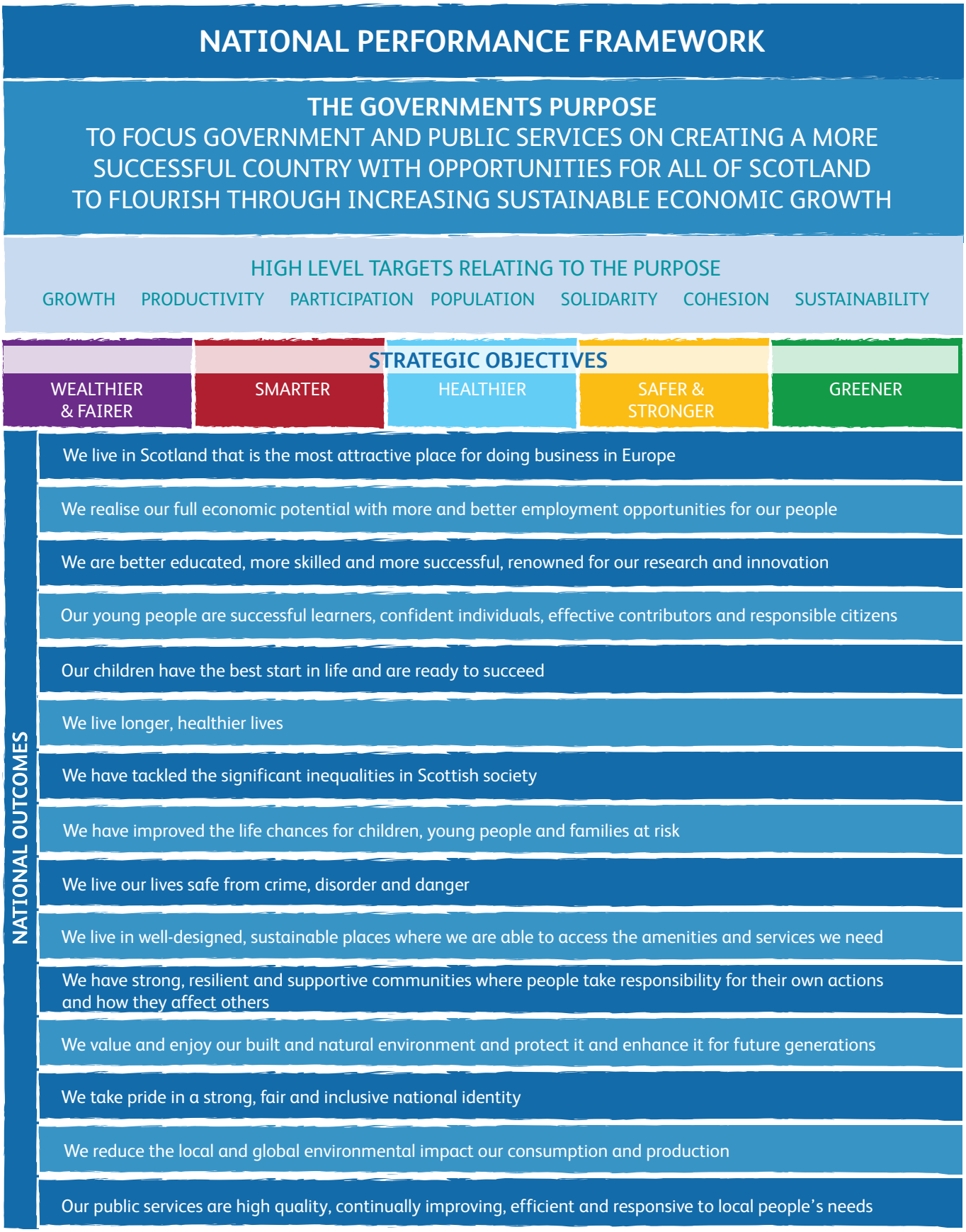
model for giving leadership and direction to a system of government, which leaves open a range of choices about the organisation of, and relationship with, the wider system to which leadership and direction are given.

The most significant and universal change was to the substance of the relationships, by using the Purpose and National Outcomes as a consistent basis for ministerial strategic directions to the full range of NDPBs and Executive Agencies, and requiring the NDPBs to align their performance measurement arrangements with the National Performance Framework based on the Purpose targets and National Outcomes.

Significantly, there was also a political agreement negotiated in 2008 between the Scottish Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, resulting in a Concordat governing the working and financial relationship between Central and local government. Alongside this was agreement that local government would adopt several of the Scottish Government's priorities for pursuit of the Purpose and National Outcomes. This was accompanied by agreement that the Scottish Government would reduce, progressively over several years, the proportion of its funding of local government that was hypothecated. From 2008-2009, Single Outcome Agreements were produced by each local authority as the basis of their relationship with the Scottish Government.

The central point of these changes in the substance of the relationship between the Scottish Government and the various parts of the Scottish public sector was to link the new concept of a single National Performance Framework, the Purpose Statement and National Outcomes, to the established arrangements for providing varying degrees of Ministerial direction to the many organisations which comprise the totality of the Scottish public sector.

Figure 5.1 Adapted from the Scottish National Performance Framework



It will be clear from Elvidge's account that the Scottish National Performance Framework is linked to a considerable system-wide effort to align governance with a common purpose. The process of

alignment is ongoing, supported by desk research, outcome audits, logic models, examination of the evidence base, cross sector workshops, and the ongoing identification of performance indicators. Plans are in tow to embed the Framework as part of the Scottish Parliament's accountability and scrutiny system, to increase its impact in the public sector, and enhance public understanding and engagement in the collective determination to measure what matters. A standing Roundtable with cross-party support, representatives of civil society, and academic continues to make direct recommendations to the centre. To ensure that the Framework lasts beyond the life of any single government, there are also plans to embed the concept in legislation together with the outcomes approach.

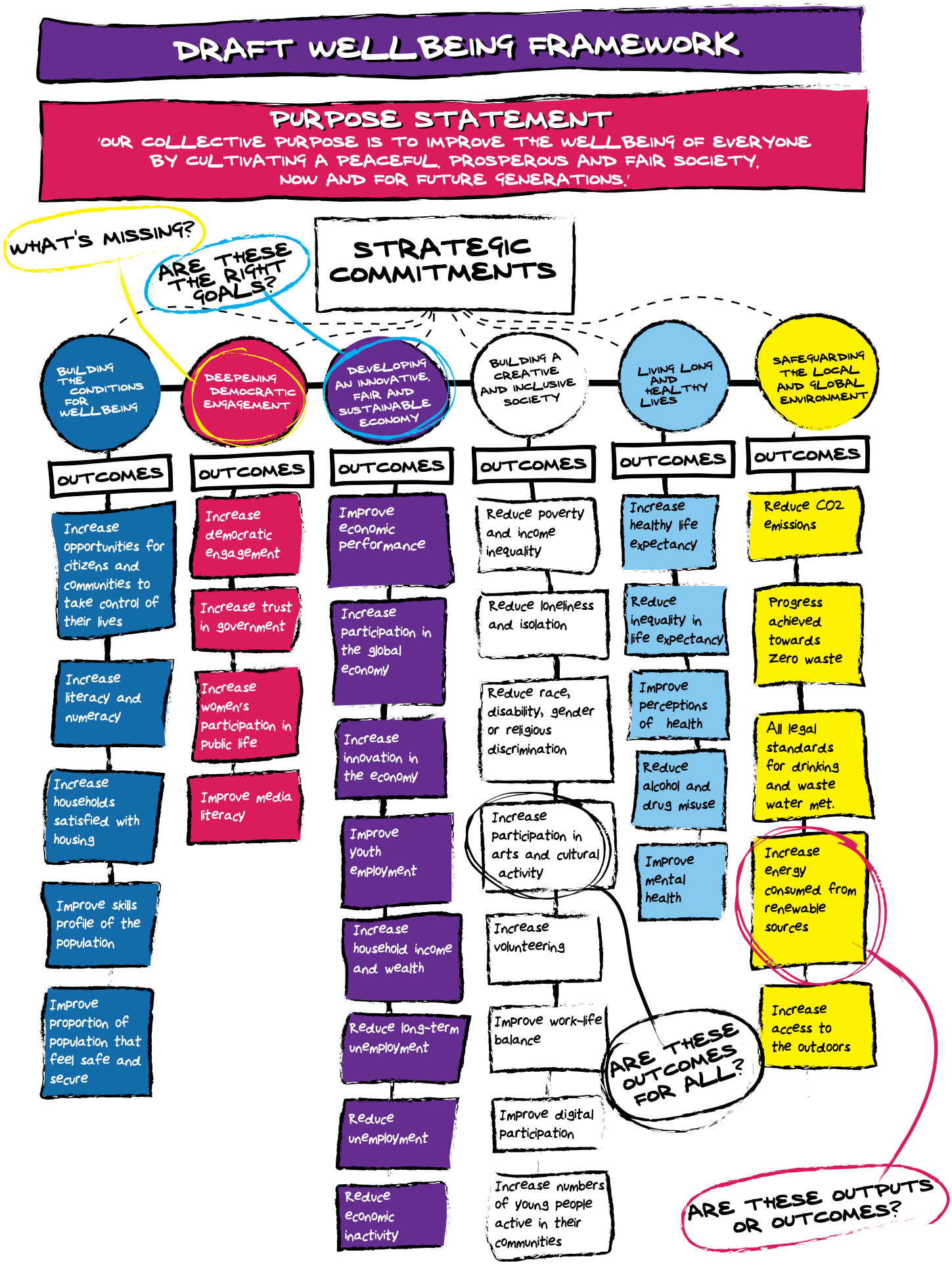
5.3 Elements of a Wellbeing Framework for Northern Ireland

An outcomes-focused Wellbeing Framework can provide a transparent, up-to-the minute assessment of how Northern Ireland is performing across a diverse range of outcomes and indicators – economic, social and environmental.

The Framework can underpin all of the work of the administration, including spending decisions. Information from the Framework can provide snapshots of progress across policy functions, assisting the scrutiny function of the Northern Ireland Assembly Committees, notably the Finance and Personnel Committee during discussions on spending.

A Wellbeing Framework can serve as the lynchpin for a series of conversations and developments already taking place across government, local government and civil society in Northern Ireland. This was one of the clearest conclusions from our deliberations with stakeholders across the public sector and beyond. Much of the groundwork, notably in building capacity for the adoption of an outcomes-focused approach to policy design, delivery and measurement, has already been initiated.

Figure 5.2: Draft Wellbeing Framework from the Roundtable on Measuring Wellbeing in Northern Ireland



Across the public sector and local government, many people are waiting for the right signals from the centre, for the cues that will unleash new creative energy around a common purpose. The adoption of a Wellbeing Framework will offer a point of convergence for a number of innovations already under way:

- Public Sector Reform
- *Delivering Social Change*
- Local Government Reform and Community Planning
- Policy initiatives such as *Making Life Better: A Whole System Strategic Framework for Public Health (2013-2023)*
- An OECD Public Sector review.

As the Scottish experience has shown, the aspiration to transform the effectiveness of policy design and impact implies much more than the rewriting of a policy script. The Wellbeing Framework can provide a transparent government platform to which all public services are aligned and serve as part of a transformative shift in how policy is made and key enabler of public service reform. In Northern Ireland, it will require:

1. **Leadership and Vision:** There is an opportunity for the leadership of the NI Executive to host a conversation with citizens with a view to arriving at a shared understanding of wellbeing as part of an over-arching statement of **shared purpose.** The conversation can address the various roles to be played across government by political representatives and the public services (civil service, local government, agencies, NDPBs etc.), with contributions by civil society and the private sector. Wellbeing and shared purpose imply a series of alignments in thinking and practice, structures and outcomes, culminating in a reinvigorated relationship between government and citizen. The Framework can support those public sector reforms and capacity building options designed to ensure that all public services are pulling in the same direction to achieve the Government's shared purpose and outcomes. The focus of this civic conversation will be the political commitments brought to the table by the governing parties in the context of preparations for the Programme for Government.

2. **Strategic Commitments:** The Wellbeing Framework can facilitate the organisation, communication and measurement of outcomes based on the Government's strategic aims and commitments, as set out in the Programme for Government. These outcomes can refer to impacts at the level of the entire population and environment or to programme-specific interventions. They should also include interim outcomes for policy areas requiring long term transformations that cannot be delivered within a single mandate of the Northern Ireland Assembly. A feature of the framework should be its contribution to short-, medium- and long-term strategic planning and transformation, aiding the adoption of a perspective that spans more than one Programme for Government or mandate while assisting governments and

citizens to monitor the direction of travel across important strategic policy areas such as the construction of a preferred socio-economic model, or energy security strategy.

3. **Outcomes:** The Wellbeing Framework provides an opportunity for a system-wide adoption of an outcomes focused approach where the focus of all government efforts – at regional and local level – is on the actual results achieved rather than inputs and outputs. At programme level, specific measurable outcomes can help track the reforms which will be necessary in all sectors of the economy and society, if we are to achieve a shift in the quality and distribution of wellbeing that we desire.

   During our Roundtable visit to the Scottish Government, we learned that an outcomes approach takes time – it is not about box ticking – and the whole organisation has to support it through its culture and behaviours. The use of improvement science has been an important component, as has an 'assets-based approach', where the Government works with the community to identify strengths and the role to be played by the community and individuals within it.

   An outcomes approach requires a strategic focus central to the raison d'être of government and directly connected to something that matters to the citizens, such as a focus on poverty reduction and inequality or the quality of the democratic experience. An outcome must be directly traceable to the Government's high level statement of statement of purpose, and new efforts to transmit and enliven that sense of purpose across all government transactions must come to replace a current focus on the mechanics of those transactions

   An outcome focus is also integral to a 'whole of government' approach, involving the co-ordination of different policy and programme areas across government, and possibly recognising the *contributions* of partners in local government and in wider civil society to a common outcome on, for example, creating the conditions for entrepreneurial activity, investment and job creation. The organisational paradigm for this approach is to be found in the language of systems and 'the learning organisation'.

   Outcomes can contribute significantly to overcoming short-termism and incrementalism. They support a change in the policy conversation – where there is a political desire and support for that shift to take place. And that change can take place all the way from the front line right back to the legislature.

4. A dashboard of **Indicators** enables us to track progress towards the achievement of the government's **shared purpose** and outcomes. **Indicators** do not provide comprehensive measurement of every activity undertaken to achieve the Outcomes and Purpose. Instead a set of indicators is carefully chosen that are representative of current priorities across a broad range of economic, social and environmental issues. An outcomes-based approach can lead to a

facilitative approach and to scrutiny tied into a cycle of learning and capacity building. A protocol will be required, involving NISRA and senior officials with responsibility for the compilation and release of data, to inform and update the Framework outcomes and indicators. Such a protocol must be agreed at Ministerial level to ensure the integrity of a Wellbeing Framework and maintain confidence in the integrity of any data released.

5. **Partnership Agreements:** Outcomes facilitate a collaborative approach to policy and service delivery, with multiple contributors playing a role in realising wellbeing. Partnership Agreements, including those between local government/community planning partnerships and central government (eg in Scotland these are known as Single Outcome Agreements), can facilitate broad-based collaboration.

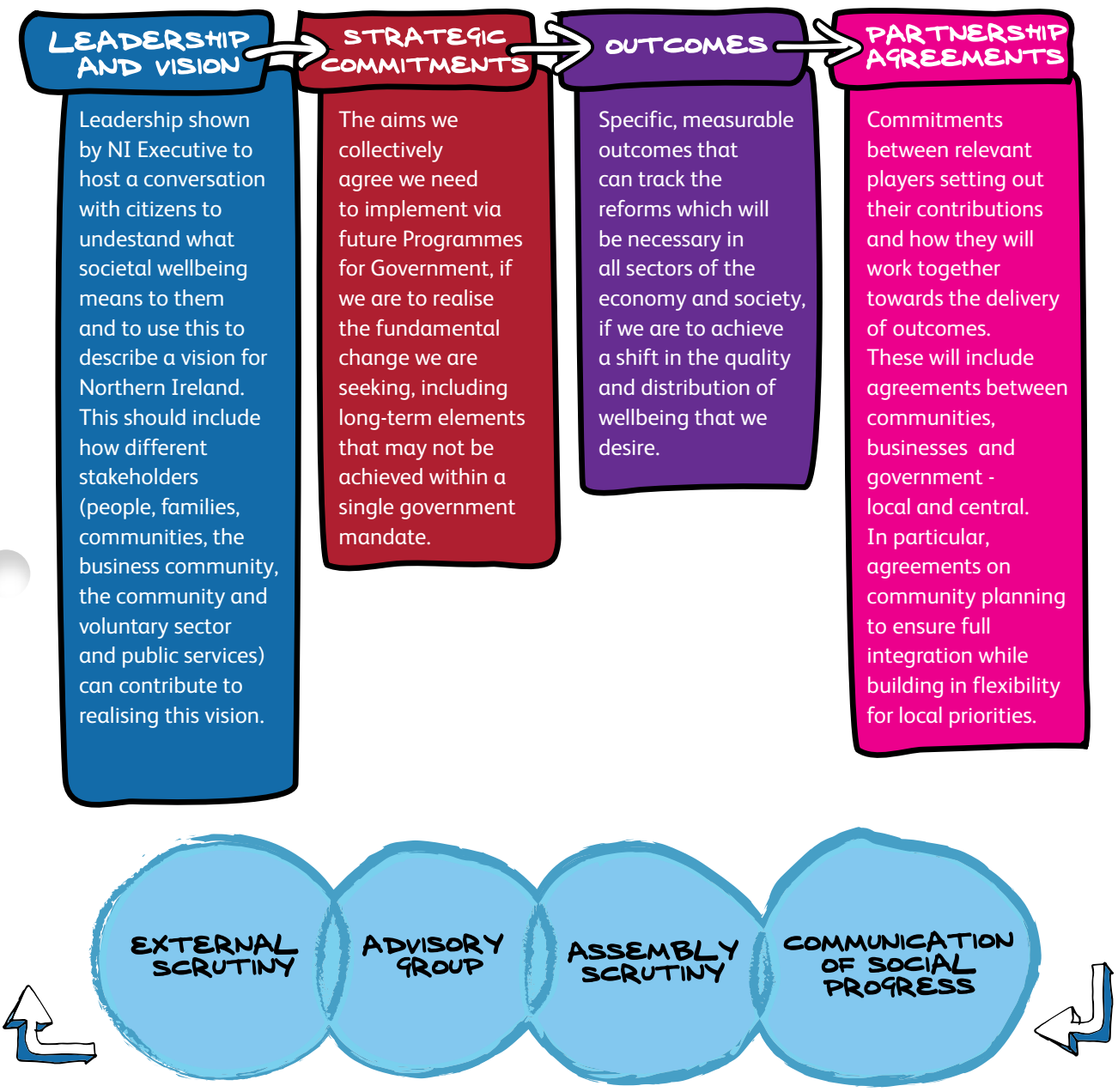
   Care will have to be exercised to build in flexibilities into an outcomes focus that respect and build on the preferences of different places. Local choice – or 'Local By Default' – is considered to be more important than standardisation.

   Community planning partnership agreements can bring together key partners to plan and deliver better evidence-based outcomes for local communities, whilst showing how progress on these local outcomes contributes towards the regional ones. Partnership Agreements can set out the undertakings of various contributors and how they will work together to realise wellbeing outcomes. In particular, agreements on community planning ensure full integration while building in flexibility for local priorities. The objective is to see different organisations working towards shared goals defined in terms of benefits to citizens and communities, led by an enhanced sense of purpose.

Implementing a Wellbeing Framework for Northern Ireland is part of a broader paradigm shift towards an outcomes-focused, preventative approach to public services. These changes are not primarily in the structures of public services but rather in their culture. Such a shift takes time and needs to be supported. Specifically, as our illustration (Figure 5.3) demonstrates, the Framework includes:

i. Leadership and Vision
ii. Strategic Commitments
iii. Outcomes
iv. Partnership Agreements.

Figure 5.3: Key Elements of the Wellbeing Framework



5.4 Strategic Commitments and Outcomes

The high-level strategic commitments that form the centrepiece of a Programme for Government can provide the starting point for the Wellbeing Framework. These in turn are supported by a set of outcomes that can deconstruct the policy dimensions of the challenge, and signpost the contributing parts of government and partners. For example, our commitment may be a fair society. The outcomes towards that aim are likely to focus on distribution of income and wealth and access to employment and training. Outcomes facilitate a joined-up approach because they involve working backwards from desired impacts to key drivers and contributory actions, rather than forwards from departmental silos. The determination of high-level government commitments are, fundamentally, the responsibility of the Executive parties.

For example, if community cohesion and social capital are key drivers of wellbeing, they need to be reflected in economic as well as social policy, since policy areas like planning, banking reform and industrial strategy all have crucial impacts on communities. Similarly, health is influenced by everything from housing to labour markets to transport and environmental policy. (NEF, 2014) The Framework, of course, cannot become an excuse for a purely aspirational discourse. As Gerry Ward, Deputy Director of the Council on Virginia's Future, noted in his submission to the Roundtable, it will be important to understand both the root causes of current wellbeing outcomes and the evidence-based approaches needed to address the principle 'drivers' of those outcomes.

This approach received universal approval during our deliberations with stakeholders. We heard that the current focus on inputs and targets is in some cases detracting from outcomes and in others, it's working against the improvements that people seek. Emphasis can often be on funding rather than focussing on which activities could have the greatest impact on citizens' health, income or education.
There is, of course, a specific context in Northern Ireland, and we therefore gave consideration to the need to include outcomes that help to track the capabilities associated with the deepening of a democratic culture. These include the level of genuine citizen participation and ownership, building united communities and non-violent communication. As the NEF noted in their submission to the Roundtable (NEF, 2014), democracy and the quality of governance are associated with higher wellbeing. Some international studies suggest that these factors may explain at least some of the relationship between national income and wellbeing. Wellbeing evidence also shows that a sense of agency and control over one's life is important, which may suggest a case for promoting democratic and participatory structures in economic and social life as well as political life.

Our work to date suggests that strategic commitments for Northern Ireland could address:

- Building the conditions for wellbeing
- Deepening democratic engagement
- Developing an innovative, fair and sustainable economy
- Building a creative and inclusive society
- Living long and healthy lives
- Safeguarding the environment (local and global).

Progress towards each of these strategic commitments would be evidenced by use of a number of key outcomes.

Box 5.3: Lough Neagh – RSPB Futurescapes programme linking biodiversity and wellbeing

Futurescapes is the landscape scale conservation programme of the RSPB. It aims to enhance or restore functioning ecosystems, support sustainable rural livelihoods and halt biodiversity decline by encouraging good environmental management and connection with nature across the landscape. A key aspect of achieving the Futurescapes vision is the application of an Ecosystem Services approach. The Ecosystem Services framework states that functioning ecosystems supply provisioning, regulating, supporting and cultural services to society (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, 2005).

It is being increasingly recognised that a connection to nature has a positive impact on personal wellbeing (eg Kaplan and Kaplan, 1995; Bird, 2007; Nisbet et al., 2011; Lin et al., 2014). This is an example of a cultural service in the Ecosystem Services framework.

The RSPB has identified opportunities to develop the awareness and benefits of the link between wellbeing and experience of the natural world in the Lough Neagh Basin Futurescape, both through practical conservation work and outreach activities. It also highlighted key wellbeing issues with cross health and community sector support that allows RSPB to develop projects which will deliver for wildlife conservation and for the people of the South Lough Neagh Area. The next step will be to formulate a pilot project in partnership with the key people and organisations in the area. Lessons and feedback from the pilot project will be used to develop and advocate for what is hoped will become a permanent nature and wellbeing aspect to RSPB's work throughout Northern Ireland.

Refs

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Lin BB, Fuller RA, Bush R, Gaston KJ, Shanahan DF (2014) Opportunity or Orientation? Who Uses Urban Parks and Why. PLoS ONE 9.

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PCAST (President's Committee of Advisors on Science and Technology) (1998). Teaming with life: Investing in Science to Understand and Use America's Living Capital. Available from http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/ostp/pcast

Insofar as the wellbeing narrative must address a new orientation to governance and delivery, including a shift to an outcomes approach, some caution will be required. Outcomes are about much more than measurement. They are only meaningful in the context of a desire to create a series of virtuous learning loops, and can fall foul of the symptoms associated with the culture of target setting such as 'gaming' and other distortions. Gaming is a term coined by Professor Christopher Hood to refer to examples of public services deliberately massaging or outright fabrication of numbers collected with the intention of improving their performance assessment[65]. They can facilitate a step change in the way in which organisations and the people within those organisations can reimagine the challenges before them, if a clear understanding of and commitment to purpose and adaptive learning is cultivated at every point in the policy design, delivery and review cycle. However, the shift towards an outcomes-focus in policy design implies a deep culture shift in the ways of working but also in the ways of imagining and problematizing (how we frame problems in the first place). And the good news is that culture shifts are free.

In conditions of complexity, an outcomes-focused approach needs to be taken up with an acceptance of uncertainty – abandoning the false assumption that real-world impacts of a given policy intervention can be accurately modelled in advance. This suggests a new approach to policymaking which values innovation and experimentation, focusing less on pre-implementation analysis and more on post-implementation evaluation (NEF 2014).

A number of public sector organisations have adopted – or signalled an intention to adopt – a proprietorial approach to outcomes. The so-called Results Based Accountability (or Outcomes-Based Accountability) system attributed to Mark Friedman provides an off-the-shelf methodology, which promises to turn data into action. The Roundtable has noted the lively debate between Dr Toby Lowe, Chief Executive of Helix Arts and Visiting Fellow at Newcastle Business School, and a leading advocate of the Friedman approach (Results Based Accountability/Outcomes Based Accountability RBA/OBA), David Burnby.[66]

Burnby's objection to Lowe's criticisms of RBA/OBA are based chiefly on the assertion that Lowe has failed to distinguish Friedman's approach from generic 'outcome-centred performance management' approaches. The debate is, perhaps, most interesting insofar as it highlights important points of agreement and generally highlights some of the risks associated with the adoption of outcomes as a performance management tool.

Whatever the outcomes approach that is taken up, it would appear that the intention is fundamental to design and delivery. The exchange between Burnby and Lowe includes a reference to Andy Brogan from Vanguard who summed up a key issue for measurement: *'If you measure for learning and improvement, then measurement is good. But if you measure for accountability, then the measure replaces and subsumes the original purpose.'*

[65] Hood, C., *Gaming in a Target World: The Targets Approach to Managing British Public Services* in Public Administration Review July/August, 2006

[66] Correspondence between David Burnby and Toby Lowe is available at: http://davidburnby.co.uk/uncategorized/the-toby-lowe-letters/

The debate raises the following issues:

- In certain cases, focusing on outcomes to measure the effectiveness of social policy interventions can create unwelcome paradoxes, distorting priorities and the practices; in conditions of complexity, outcomes-based approaches to managing accountability can lead to gaming and goal displacement.
- There is a consensus against 'command and control' target setting management thinking;
- A useful distinction introduced by the Friedman approach is that between 'Whole Population Accountability' and 'Performance Accountability': Whole population accountability is about ends (the desired conditions of wellbeing we want for communities) while performance accountability is about the means of getting there, and involves the accountability of service providers for the wellbeing of their own client groups. A related distinction is the labels given to data. Data used to inform progress against a strategy at the whole population level is generally known as 'indicators', and data used to inform the effectiveness of services on their client populations is generally known as 'performance measures'.
- Discussions about desired 'end states' (wellbeing) must involve all parties and a bringing together of partnerships with a shared purpose. Trust is key.
- It is preferable to move towards a desired and shared outcome than away from a problem. Deliberation on desired end states should not be limited to 'needs' and 'deficits' but focus on assets and possibilities. For example, Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) favours co-production, models of action which are fundamentally different to the conventional model of service provision by statutory providers. ABCD sees communities as assets that are part of the solution; not as passive recipients of 'service delivery'.
- Where logic modelling may lead to an over-simplification of presumed causes and effects, the narratives and stories behind baseline analyses can compensate;
- Manipulation is the only rational behaviour in a system in which you are being held to account by means of something which is outside one's control, particularly within systems where you are competing against other organisations for resources.

In her submission to the Roundtable, Karen Scott, Newcastle Institute for Social Renewal, offered a considered view on the risks surrounding outcomes. While conceding that wellbeing should inform policy which should produce better outcomes, she cautioned against the adoption of a 'problem-solving' approach to policy which has been critiqued by many policy analysts. She referred to studies[67] that have shown how outcomes-based approaches can cause game playing amongst public sector workers, where workers become adept at making the targets look good while the actual problems remain persistent for the most vulnerable in society. She cautioned that in any outcomes-based approach, the potential for this sort of game playing needs to be considered carefully. Any adoption of rewards or penalties for target meeting creates a culture of not admitting when something has not worked. She offered: *'I strongly and respectfully suggest that part of a focus on wellbeing includes a whole public sector culture shift, away from targets and towards transparency, understanding and*

[67] Bevan, G. and Hood, C., 'What's Measured is What Matters: Targets and Gaming in the English Public Health Care System', *Public Health Administration* 84(3), 2006, p. 517-538 and work by Toby Lowe, including an article in The Guardian online, 'Payment by Results: "A dangerous idiocy" that makes staff tell lies' (http://www.theguardian.com/local-government-network/2013/feb/01/payment-results-staff-fictions).

trust. Where outcomes are used, they need to be realistic and achievable with a clear pathway between policy and impact. In addition, we need to recognise that many outcomes are unpredictable, some important aspects of life cannot be easily measured as an outcome [for example someone's ability to love and care for others] but we must trust that we can create the best conditions for that outcome to happen (for example by supporting the early emotional development of children and giving families help in difficult times). Some outcomes require a very long time to emerge and require a leap of faith and trust in public sector workers to do their best with their knowledge and experience and the available evidence. So, in short, I think that there is a growing body of evidence to suggest we need to think through the implications and consequences of adopting outcomes-based approaches.'[68]

5.5 The Purpose of a Wellbeing Framework

An outcomes-focused Wellbeing Framework can form the centrepiece or act as the lynchpin for an ongoing series of reforms and initiatives geared to strengthening the connection between government, citizens and communities. The Framework can bring new levels of transparency to deliberation on the economic and non-economic sources of wellbeing, and provide an over-arching process for the enhanced design and long-term monitoring of Programmes for Governments and the outcomes derived from the commitments set out by the Executive.

Outcomes approaches also raise far reaching questions about the contributions of private or commercial activities. These contributions can, of course, be positive and harnessed at the local level but, where they are negative (e.g. advertising an media impacts on children's diet, attention or screen time) there can be severe limits on the policy levers available at a local or regional level. Care must be exercised to accompany any programme of designing outcomes with a realistic map of the levers available at the community level, and at other levels of intervention in our multi-level systems of governance and power.

A key test for the design of the Wellbeing Framework will be its role in supporting a shift towards 'strategic agility'[69] by the Northern Ireland Executive. Like most governments, the Northern Ireland Executive is confronted by contingent dynamism, information overload, uncertainty, specialisation, interdependence, complexity and other unintended consequences – as a result of the current policy environment. Contemporary economies and societies can be conceptualised as *multi-level nested systems-of-systems or complex adaptive systems*, consisting of multiple interacting and interdependent sub-systems at different levels of aggregation, in which numerous decision-makers interact, adapt, lean and innovate in emergent phenomena and evolutionary processes.

The Framework is not offered as a magical technocratic fix, and will not succeed if it is received as such. The Framework and the outcomes approach can complement but not totally fulfil all the policy challenges presented by new "wicked problems" and the increasing complexity and uncertainty of the current socio-economic environment. More than data and analysis, the new governance challenges require new interpretative frameworks and theories from policymakers, set within collaborative and multidisciplinary structures that can take into account growing interdependencies and shared value creation opportunities across policy domains and jurisdictions.

[68] Karen Scott's submission to the Carnegie Roundtable, 2014.

[69] Hamalainen, T. et. al. Faculty and Research Working Paper: Strategic Agility in Public Management: New Perspectives from INSEAD-Sitra Cooperation, 2012, INSEAD/SITRA.

Moreover, as Karen Scott, Newcastle Institute for Social Renewal, commented in her submission to the Roundtable, many of the issues that impact on wellbeing cannot be addressed by local or even national governments in isolation, they are global in nature. A number of contributors to the Roundtable underlined the wisdom of approaching wellbeing – including wellbeing outcomes – with a view to synergies available from cross-border collaboration. With a fast growing number of OECD countries looking seriously at using a wellbeing approach or Framework, alongside the World Health Organisation and the United Nations, a shared wellbeing agenda between local and national government and co-operation across countries could help create necessary shifts in development narratives which recognise 21st-century challenges.

6. Citizen Engagement

6.1 The Principle of Citizen Engagement in Wellbeing Frameworks

In the context of Sen's capability approach, Alexander (2008)[70] has noted that democracy per se has a constructive role and we can anticipate that a wellbeing narrative and performance framework – insofar as it is designed to enhance and deepen public engagement – can make a contribution to that democratising role. At a fundamental level, the exercise of political freedoms, particularly by ways of informing public critique and protest, are not only useful in demanding a policy response towards urgent economic needs (instrumental). Public debates and discussions that accompany political freedoms play a 'formative' or 'educative' role in conceptualising and prioritising these economic needs. Public reasoning *per se* can influence the cultivation of values of redistribution, justice, respect and solidarity, so the very practice of democracy gives citizens an opportunity to learn from one another, and helps society to form its values and priorities. The quality of deliberation that might be facilitated by a wellbeing framework is, in itself, an expression of wellbeing in a post-conflict society.

Sen's capability approach has strong links to the literature on human rights. As Anderson (2008) notes, the capability approach is motivated by the idea that there are certain choices or freedoms that people ought to have available to them regardless of whether or not they actually choose to exercise them or whether their subjective feelings of wellbeing are affected by their availability or non-availability. An individual's capability is defined as the set of functionings that they have available to them given their resources and personal characteristics.

The Roundtable believes that citizen engagement is therefore critical to the success of the Wellbeing Framework. There are different approaches to understanding wellbeing. An expert, technocractic approach asserts that wellbeing can be understood using statistical techniques to probe data. The Roundtable does not share this approach. We believe that wellbeing is a complex and multi-faceted concept which is best understood through dialogue with citizens. Statistical analysis only includes the variables within the regression model – it can calculate the unknown 'x-factor', but not guess at it. This is a fundamental problem for a wellbeing framework as it only values that for which we already have strong quantitative data. Reflecting on her experiences of qualitative work on wellbeing, Dr Karen Scott commented in her evidence that her engagement with the public on wellbeing:

> *'[It] was different from the usual consultations, and so the nature of the discussion and the findings were different. It allowed some things to gain much more legitimacy in the council, like focusing on security (economic, job and personal), the reduction of personal debt (which had largely been a non-concern but the study highlighted this as a serious problem which affected many), the role of women in society, the importance of the natural environment for people's mental health etc. Over time, these shifts were important because they gradually allowed different issues to be recognised and to become a legitimate public policy concern. It was useful not only because it allowed a different focus, but because it opened up a different evidence base for policy makers to argue from.'*

[70] Alexander, J.M., Capabilities and Social Justice: The Political Philosophy of Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum, 2008, Ashgate.

Dialogue with citizens is therefore critical to the development of the Wellbeing Framework to ensure that it does not merely reproduce existing assumptions about wellbeing and social progress.

Our second reason for recommending strong citizen engagement relates to legitimacy. Without effective and meaningful engagement with communities the wellbeing framework will lack authenticity. A key problem identified by the BRAINPOoL project was the lack of democratic legitimacy of many indicator sets which are developed by experts with no public involvement. The Carnegie UK Trust has also been critical of the lack of public engagement in the early versions of Scotland Performs (though this gap is now being rectified). Engaging citizens in a public conversation about what matters and how we should measure it has the potential to build greater buy-in to a new Wellbeing Framework, as well as providing the foundations for a new policy narrative. The framework can become one element in a movement to renew and deepen democratic engagement with our political institutions.

Our third argument supporting citizen engagement relates to the complexity of modern policymaking. As governments confront increasingly complex challenges across a range of social, economic and ecological fields, policymakers and political representatives have shown new interest in collaborative ways of working with citizens and communities. A Wellbeing Framework with effective engagement can provide a platform for nuanced conversations about some of the real predicaments that confront decision-makers in every field.

Finally, public engagement can in itself be a helpful tool in mobilising other communities, such as policy designers and civil servants. Direct contact with members of the public can be a refreshing experience for officials, circumventing the usual channels and filters by which they access information.

6.2 The Practice of Citizen Engagement in Wellbeing Frameworks

The Roundtable believes strongly that citizens should be at the heart of a new Wellbeing Framework for Northern Ireland. To ensure citizens were involved from the outset, we commissioned a series of focus groups with participants from different groups in our society. The aim was to gather the thoughts and opinions of citizens, providing them with an opportunity to become engaged with the idea of wellbeing and how it should be measured. Key findings were:

1. Strong agreement with the central proposition that wellbeing should be a focus for the NI Executive, Local Government and partners.
2. Agreement that wellbeing would be a useful focus for both the NI Executive and others in policy development.
3. That meaningful consultation is needed and that issues raised must be taken seriously and followed through – not used as a 'tick box exercise'.

We believe that this work provides an indication that the central arguments of the Roundtable have support from citizens. But this is far from sufficient engagement in the development of the Framework.

To do this effectively, it requires the widest level of engagement with the citizens of Northern Ireland. This requires a significant departure from traditional consultation mechanisms. The Northern Ireland Executive should capitalise on the simplicity of the language of wellbeing to stimulate a mass conversation. As one respondent noted: *'The intuitive simplicity of wellbeing offers a chance to get this buy-in of ordinary citizens in the first place.'*

Figure 6.1 International examples of citizen engagement in Wellbeing Frameworks (adapted from Shifting the Dial)

	INSEE (France) report on national accounts of wellbeing	Virginia Performs	Canadian Index on Wellbeing	UK Office of National Statistics	Scotland Performs
Ownership	Government agency	Government	Independent	Government agency	Government
Civil society involvement in the development of the 'dashboard'	Low	Medium	High	High	Low
Focus on dissemination to citizens and civil society	Low	Medium	Medium	High	Medium
Subjective wellbeing, dashboard or index	Subjective wellbeing	Dashboard	Index and dashboard	Dashboard and Subjective Wellbeing	Dashboard

As Figure 6.1 shows, citizen engagement is common in the examples of Wellbeing Frameworks explored by the Roundtable. But crucially, citizen engagement in wellbeing tends to depart from paper-based consultation exercises or commissioned focus groups, preferring instead to open up space for a dialogue with citizens. The Wales We Want is an excellent example of this approach, where people are encouraged to take part in a different type of conversation:

> *'This is a National Conversation on behalf of future generations, an opportunity to look beyond the short-term pressures of everyday life to 'The Wales we Want' for ourselves, our children and grandchildren. It will help us to focus on the long term legacy we want to leave for future generations and we recognise that the future does not just happen, but that we create it through the decisions and actions we take today. It recognises that we are all increasingly focused on the short-term pressures of the day to day, while a culture of short termism increasingly pervades political life as the 24/7 media and the nature of social media calls for immediate responses with Governments being driven by the "urgency of now".'* (http://thewaleswewant.co.uk/sites/default/files/Interim%20Report%20July%202014.pdf)

The report of the pilot phase shows the success of this open and inclusive model:

- Over 200 delegates at the conversation launch
- Over 7,000 on-line registrations expressing an interest in being part of the conversation
- Over 100 registered 'Futures Champions' (who are groups and organisations who carry the conversation forward through their own networks)
- Over 50 National Conversation events taken place across Wales
- Nearly 1,000 interactions on social media
- Reached over 1 million through broadcast news
- Over 300 completed postcards, from six years of age upwards.

The Roundtable's view is that the ambition for Northern Ireland should be to have a conversation on the same scale.

Our ambitions for citizen engagement relate not only to the numbers involved, but also the influence that they can have on the process. A number of respondents, and our focus group participants, counselled us to ensure that the views of local communities are not ultimately ignored in the political decision-making.

In addition to the engagement in the original process, it is essential that citizens continue to be involved in the development and implementation of the Wellbeing Framework. Experience from Scotland and proposals for Wales strongly suggest embedding consultation in Community Planning is a particularly useful mechanism to promote 'a community conversation at the most local level' which should be 'seized and exploited to the full'. The reform of local government and community planning present a timely platform for citizens to engage in a meaningful process of shaping policies and places.

6.3 Communicating our Progress on Wellbeing

Responses received to our call for evidence identified different approaches to publishing wellbeing data:

1. Using subjective wellbeing as a headline figure to gather attention (ONS Measuring National Wellbeing Programme);
2. Producing a dashboard of wellbeing indicators that can be presented on one page (Scotland Performs and the ONS Measuring National Wellbeing programme)
3. Compiling an index to produce one figure on social progress (Oxfam Scotland's Humankind Index and the Canadian Index of Wellbeing).

There are advantages and disadvantages associated with each of these approaches. On balance, we are recommending that producing a dashboard of indicators will best enable the use of wellbeing data in policy development and avoid a superficial conversation on subjective wellbeing or the mechanics of production of an index.

However, dashboards can be unwieldy and attention should be paid to producing as accessible a publication as possible. We agree with the approach taken in Scotland and Virginia of ensuring that the dashboard can be produced on one page of A4. Since these were established, practice on infographics has improved and we would recommend this approach to produce a visually appealing dashboard for Northern Ireland.

In many ways, the proposed Framework is a communication tool designed to enhance communication within the policy community and communicate performance to a wider audience. Meaningful communication and use of an indicators dashboard can be achieved given:

i. A commitment to simplicity and accessibility in data visualisation;
ii. The use of a dashboard or range of economic, social and environmental indicators in a way that allows the interface user to track progress in near real-time (and possibly provide feedback);
iii. Engage the cultural and media communities on the best ways to engage the active involvement of user groups so that the Framework data is meaningful, resonant and accessible; and
iv. From the outset, design the communications system around social media opportunities for feedback and crowd sourcing experiments in data collection and display.

Voluntary Arts Ireland welcomes the Carnegie UK Trust's commitment to measuring wellbeing in Northern Ireland the associated literature and discussion is an important contribution to the debate on how we collectively move on from conflict in Northern Ireland. We would argue that the creative life of citizens has a huge part to play in this. (Voluntary Arts Ireland, contribution to Roundtable consultation, 2014)

The publication of wellbeing data is as significant an event in our national conversation as the publication of GDP is. To achieve this, it is vital that the presentation of the data is user-friendly. Disseminating messages through the mainstream media is a critical means of reaching a wider audience and social media should be pursued. A detailed communications plan is a requirement of any major government initiative, and the communications elements of the Wellbeing Framework should be sufficiently resourced to ensure that the findings are disseminated to as many citizens as possible.

The timing of releases of data was also discussed by the Roundtable, prompted by conversations in Scotland. The Scotland Performs website updates the dashboard in 'real time' as data becomes available. This ensures decisions are made on the best available data. However, it does mean that there is no annual release. The Roundtable recommends combining approaches to put indicator data online in real time, but also to produce an annual report which includes a narrative on the social progress of Northern Ireland. This annual report on Northern Ireland's Progress should be laid before the Assembly and be the subject of debate.

7.New Ways of Working

7.1 Aligning the System: System Reset

The alignment of various elements in the governmental system (reimagined as a 'single organisation') is critical to the success of a wellbeing framework, and demands the creation of on-going processes to oversee and review the system. The refreshing cross-sector experience of our Roundtable conversations during 2014 underlined the value of these all-too-rare opportunities available for stock-taking across parts of government, local government and civil society.

Box 7.1 Public Sector Reform in Northern Ireland

Under the leadership of Finance and Personnel Minister, Simon Hamilton MLA, public administration in Northern is already experiencing transformation.

Developments include:

- The creation of a Public Sector Reform Division
- A modern IT-driven staff innovation scheme called 'Ideas Engine' which gives staff the chance to be involved in service redesign
- The launch of a Northern Ireland Public Sector Innovation Laboratory
- The publication of the first Northern Ireland wellbeing data with the beginning of a better focus on outcomes
- Executive agreement to engage the OECD to conduct the first ever sub-national public governance review.

If the Framework is to deliver, it must be supported by co-production style workshops where different parts of the governmental system and partners can come together to align and challenge their respective directions and understandings. This is the only way to prompt a discursive alignment of the system alongside the institutional reforms that will also be required.

Policymakers must keep a number of questions to the fore:

- Does everyone in the system know what the Government (and its partners) are trying to achieve (and contribute to outcomes)?
- Is everyone prioritising the improvements most likely to have the biggest impact on the aims and stopping those that have had little impact?
- Is it possible to measure and report progress?

7.2 The Enabling State

Box 7.2: Using an outcomes-based approach to reducing child poverty

In February 2012, the National Children's Bureau (NCB NI) and the Centre for Excellence and Outcomes (C4EO) were commissioned by the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMdFM) to assist it in establishing an approach for bringing together Government departments so that each department has an opportunity to understand its role in terms of reducing child poverty. A key aim of this work was to develop a Child Poverty Outcomes Framework. The Framework includes 4 outcomes:

- Families have adequate income and work that pays
- Children in poverty achieve good educational outcomes
- Children and families thrive and have a healthy future
- Children and families live in a safe and secure environment.

These outcomes are evidenced by a set of primary and secondary indicators. The OFMdFM uses the framework to assess which interventions are likely to produce the best outcomes over the long term and the impact of programmes already in place.

Achieving wellbeing outcomes that require action in partnership across departments, local government and the wider public sector, implies some significant changes to traditional ways of working. Many of these changes are captured in the concept of the 'Enabling State', a way of viewing the changing role of the state that recognises that traditional models of public service delivery cannot solve our most complex social problems.[71] In recent years, we have seen policymakers and politicians take a growing interest in 'bottom up' ways of working that give citizens and communities more control. A new more responsive and engaged type of state is emerging.

The basic proposition is that although our welfare state has largely served us well, it has failed the same disadvantaged minority over and over again. The state is excellent at providing standardised services but its ability to improve wellbeing in all circumstances is limited. Certain areas of our wellbeing can be best improved through our interactions with friends and family and through community activity. If we are to continue to improve wellbeing, a fundamental rethinking of the state's relationship to citizens and communities is required. This leads to the conclusion that the state should continue providing the public services that it excels at, but it must also take on a new role, that of the 'Enabling State', empowering and supporting communities, individuals and families to play a more active role in improving their own wellbeing.

[71] The Enabling State http://www.enablingstate.co.uk/ [accessed February, 2015]

Research by the Carnegie UK Trust in all five jurisdictions of the UK and Ireland found clear evidence that people wish to be in control of their own lives.[72] There is also evidence that feeling in control is a factor in better physical and mental health. So it goes with the grain of both our individual and our collective interest to seek to maximise that control.

We are surrounded by examples in areas such as health and education, for example, of people making a success of the control they do have and taking decisions about their lives, as well as the lives of their families and communities, which extend that control.

The common thread is that people believe that they can deliver better results than central or local government, or than a private sector or voluntary sector organisation working under contract to government. The power of the evidence is that often the results suggest that they have been right to believe that.

This way of seeing the world crosses conventional party political boundaries. All the main parties have a long-established thread of their political thought which is a recognisable version of these ideas, although they use different language from each other to express them. Similarly, it does not seem that the actions necessary to move forward imply an inclination towards one political party's thinking rather than that of another.

The Carnegie UK Trust research charted a common shift in thinking evident in each of the five jurisdictions of the UK and Ireland and identified seven policy innovations that encapsulate the move toward a more Enabling State:

- From target setting to outcomes
- From top-down to bottom-up
- From representation to participation
- From silos to working together
- From crisis management to prevention
- From doing-to to doing with (from recipients to co-producers)
- From state to the third sector.[73]

In his report on the Enabling State, Carnegie Fellow, Sir John Elvidge, concludes: *'The shift towards the enabling state has the potential to deliver a bright future in which the state successfully creates the conditions in which individuals and communities are equally able to take action to improve their own and others' lives. In this bright future, we see improved outcomes for all sections of our society.'* [74]

The Roundtable believes that these seven policy innovations, and more besides, comprise important ways of working that are either new or at least not yet well established in Northern Ireland's public sector. They comprise, at minimum, highly-desirable advances on traditional approaches and, in some cases, essential prerequisites for a successful focus on wellbeing outcomes. We have identified a

[72] Wallace, J., *The Rise of the Enabling State: A review of policy and evidence across the UK and Ireland* Carnegie UK Trust: Dunfermline (2013) www. http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/2013/the-rise-of-the-enabling-state [accessed February, 2015]

[73] Ibid

[74] Elvidge, J., *A route map to an Enabling State* Carnegie UK Trust: Dunfermline 2014 www. http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/2014/a-route-map-to-the-enabling-state [accessed Feb. 2015]

number of opportunities and priorities that we set out below.

7.3 The Role of the Programme for Government

Box 7.3: Investing in Wellbeing in the Private Sector – Case Study Forward Emphasis International

Forward Emphasis International, one of the UK and Ireland's leading business process and customer relationship management outsourcing companies, has operated for 15 years in its current location in Co. Donegal. The company delivers highly complex and financial regulated voice and back office transactions for major FTSE 100 and Fortune 500 companies in the areas of banking and financial services. They employ between 200 and 250 local people annually, contributing close to €50m in salary to the local community in North Inishowen.

With a strong commitment to ethics, they believe that attention to the wellbeing of employees and clients is an investment that delivers returns for all stakeholders. For example, the company supports participation in regular 'retreats' in France, with opportunities for downtime, networking, yoga, mindfulness and Neurolinguistic Programming (NLP) courses as an integral part of on-going professional development training and support.

If a Wellbeing Framework is the place where a clear vision, expressed as a set of high-level outcomes and indicators, is articulated, the Programme for Government is the strategic document that sets out progress towards that vision for the five-year term of one Assembly.

The Roundtable views the Programme for Government (PfG) process as pivotal in taking forward and developing the role of a Wellbeing Framework. The PfG process could adopt, in principle, the Wellbeing Framework as an opportunity for establishing, delivering and measuring short-, medium- and especially long-term policy outcomes; this implies drawing on the Wellbeing Framework over the course of a number of Programmes for Government.

Future PfGs might restate the over-arching purpose and strategic commitments of the Framework and then set out what progress towards the relevant outcomes is to be achieved over the following four years. Policies and programmes directly contributing to the Framework's central outcomes would be measured by the relevant indicators of progress.

The Roundtable was impressed by the approach taken in the 'Strategy for Justice in Scotland' (Figure 7.1) in which it is possible to clearly see how the activities undertaken feed through to the national outcomes of the Scottish National Performance Framework.[75] The strategy also includes a set of indicators of progress (Figure 7.2) towards justice outcomes which can for the most part be reported on annually or within the period of one Parliament.

[75] *The Strategy for Justice in Scotland* Scottish Government: Edinburgh 2012 www. http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2012/09/5924 [accessed February, 2015]

Figure 7.1: Adapted from Scottish Government Justice Strategy

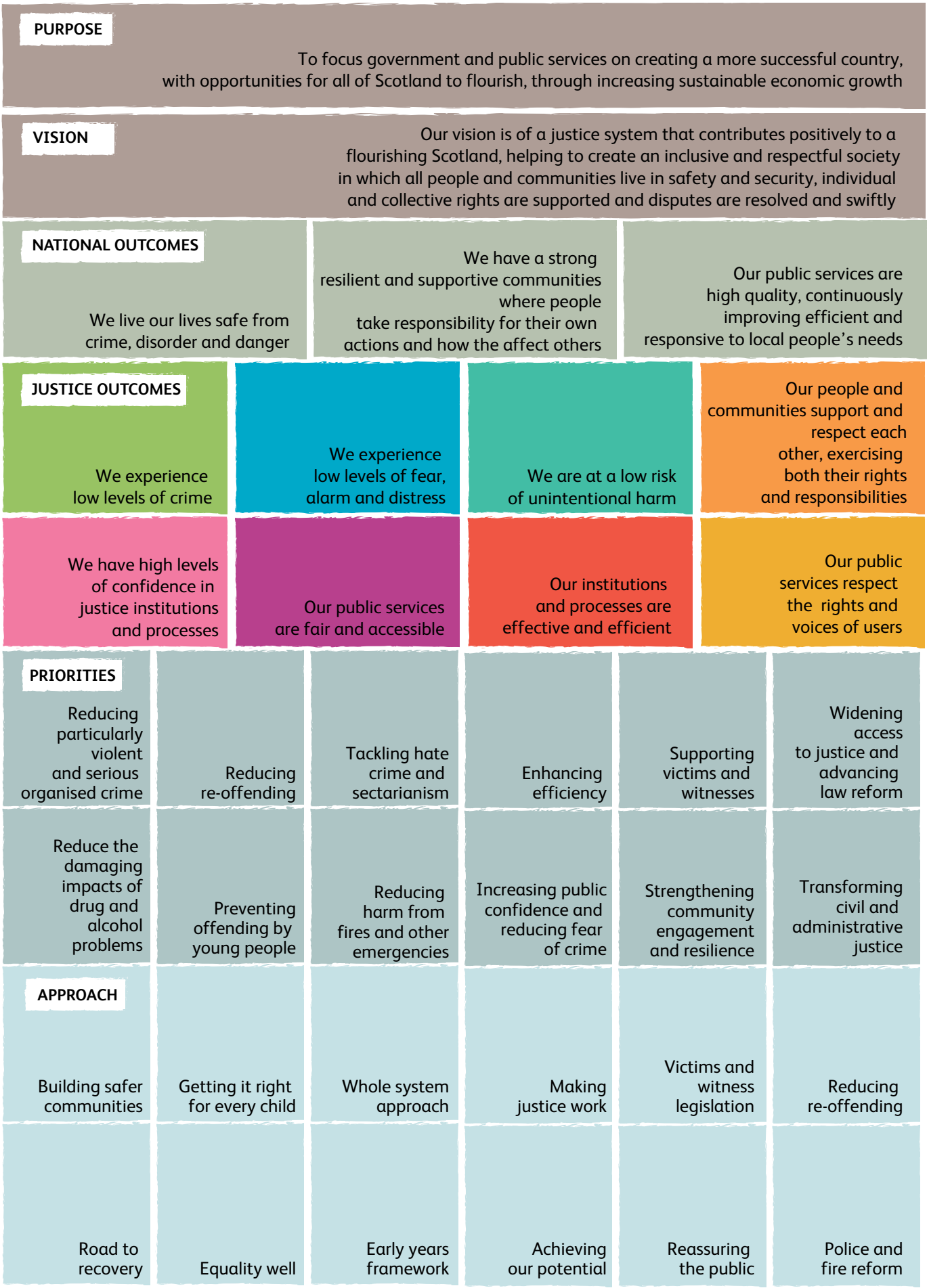
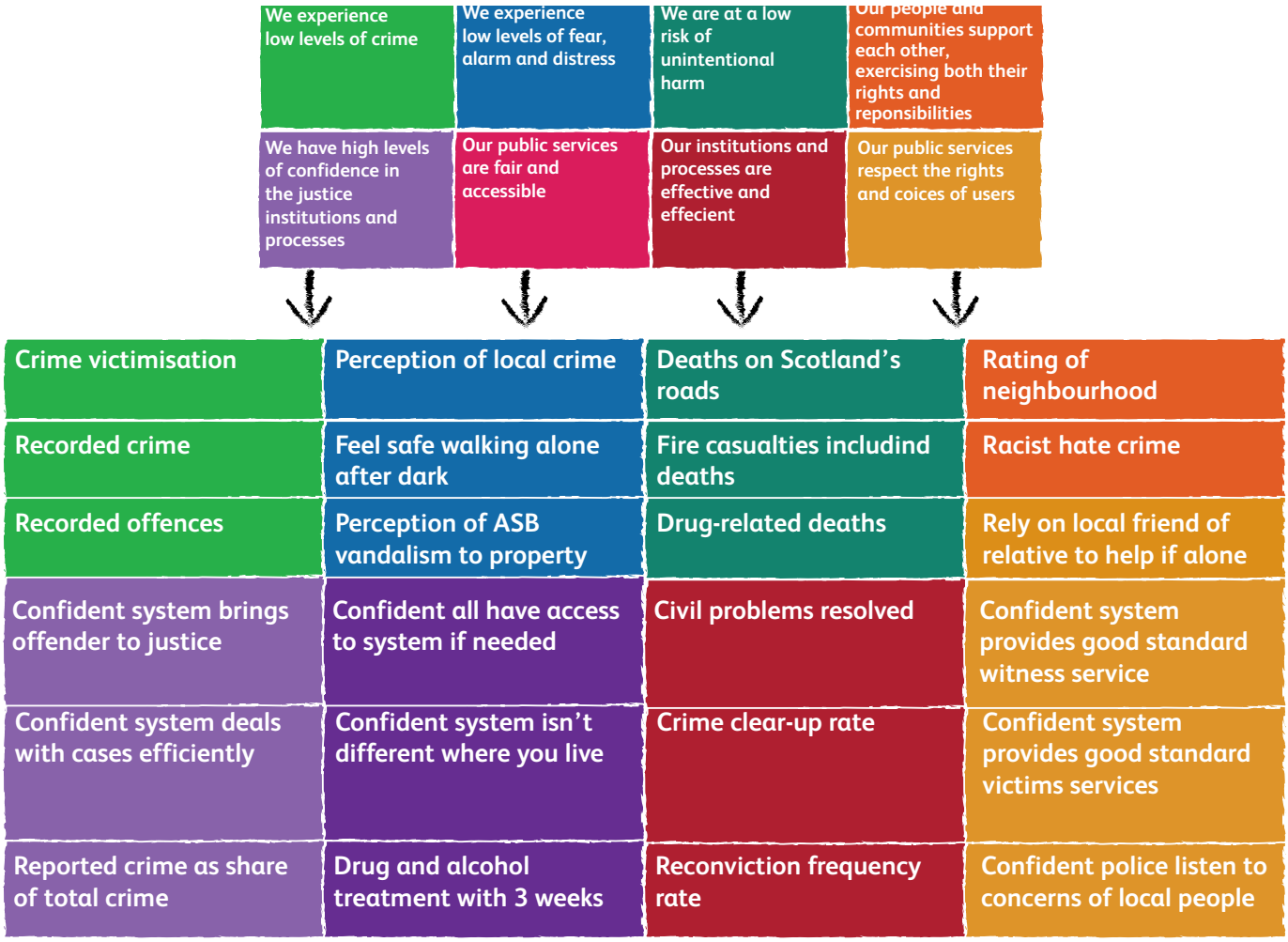


Figure 7.2 Adapted from The Strategy for Justice in Scotland



7.4 The 2016-21 Programme for Government

In the immediate term, the Roundtable is proposing that the upcoming Programme for Government is informed by our recommendations with a special focus on taking up an outcomes-based approach for the measurement of policy impacts and reforms. It will be important to ensure that the policy delivery community is equipped (in terms of skills, methodologies, and engagement with the non-governmental sectors) to take the recommendations forward.

If the Programme for Government is to focus on the achievement of those outcomes, considerable work will be required in advance by Departments and between Departments on the development of policies and programmes, integrating work that has previously been pursued in silos and establishing new partnerships across the public sector and beyond. The Framework will bring a new rigour, effectiveness and efficiency to the delivery of policy priorities as these emerge from the Programme for Government process.

7.5 Strategic Integration

The successful implementation of an outcomes-focused approach is heavily dependent on the ability of government to cut across traditional departmental boundaries such that the work of different

arms of government is aligned towards common goals. The UK departmental model of government is a highly siloed one that struggles to take an integrated approach to both policy and delivery. In Northern Ireland, this is particularly marked as a result of both the statutory independence of departments and the d'Hondt system that allocates departments to different political parties.

While in Northern Ireland there is often an absence of short-term political reward for collaboration between Ministers from different political parties, the Roundtable was struck by an observation in the Scottish Government Performance Unit's response to our consultation:

> *'The experience in Scotland has shown that placing wellbeing at the heart of measures of progress for a country facilitates a shared understanding of what matters which cuts across political boundaries. Focusing on an agreed set of shared outcomes provides a space where party differences can be put aside for the good of achieving common goals.'*

A recent development that has the potential to support such a collaborative approach is the requirement in the Stormont House Agreement to agree the Programme for Government in advance of the running of d'Hondt for the appointment of Ministers.[76] This could have the benign effect of reducing the impact of Ministers' natural desire to protect their own departmental resources, potentially at the expense of shared outcomes, as at the point of agreeing the PfG it may not be clear which party will control which department.

Barriers to cross-departmental working are not necessarily primarily political, however, as evidenced by a history of similarly siloed working in all other jurisdictions of the UK and Ireland where government is generally controlled by one party at a time. Scotland's answer to the challenge of a more integrated approach was a radical one – the abolition of departments and their replacement with 37 directorates grouped under the leadership of six Directors-General. Each Director-General, reporting to a Minister, is responsible for delivering the strategic objectives set by the Government in their entirety with a focus on contributing to collective objectives.[77] On our study visit to Edinburgh, the Roundtable heard from leading politicians and senior civil servants who reported positively on the new system. While such a radical approach is unlikely to find favour here, the use of a Wellbeing Framework has the potential to foster a spirit of collaboration across party divides.

7.6 Budgeting for Outcomes

If wellbeing outcomes that cut across departmental boundaries are to become the primary focus of public policy, they will need to be supported by appropriate budgetary processes. It is easy to see how a policy or programme that depends on resource inputs from a number of different departments may struggle without a clear process for allocation of funds. In a previous mandate, the Assembly sought to encourage cross-departmental working through the creation of the Executive Programme Funds. The intention was to stimulate proposals from two or more departments that would help deliver the aims of the Programme for Government and there are useful lessons to be learnt from that

[76] Stormont House Agreement (2015) https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-stormont-house-agreement paragraph 61 [accessed February, 2015]
[77] Elvidge, J, *Northern Exposure: Lessons from the first twelve years of devolved government in Scotland* London 2011: Institute for Government www. http://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/publications/northern-exposure [accessed Feb. 2015]

experience. The most recent draft budget proposes the introduction of a Change Fund which aims to support cross-cutting reform initiatives and preventative measures.

Thus budgeting on a cross-cutting basis has a modest track record, but the kind of budgeting for outcomes envisaged would clearly be different in terms of both scale and approach. There is increasing interest in Northern Ireland, as well as the UK and internationally, on linking budget decisions to outcomes. Governments around the world (for example in Canada and Australia) have begun to focus on how to link outcomes to the budget process. Outcomes-based budgeting is a complex area of activity and the Executive and the Assembly Finance and Personnel Committee have already begun looking at this issue. As a research report for the Committee states, the precise approach taken depends on the motivation.[78] The literature suggests three reasons for linking budgets to outcomes:

- it supports accountability and transparency and facilitates proper scrutiny of the budgets presented to parliaments and assemblies
- it aids efficiency by improving allocation of monies and;
- it improves public sector performance.

The Committee's research report is clear that the international evidence of the effectiveness of budgeting for outcomes is mixed, but there is a compelling argument that the Executive should further consider performance linked, collaborative budget processes, using the Wellbeing Framework to inform the allocation process. The Finance and Personnel Committee should take the lead in integrating the Wellbeing Framework into cross-departmental budgeting and spending and scrutiny of the Executive's overall performance and capacity to deliver the strategic outcomes.

This approach to budgeting also has important implications for the success of community planning (see section 7.7) potentially allowing budgets that are currently controlled separately by community planning partners to be refocused behind the agreed outcomes in the community plan.

By focusing relentlessly on the outcomes that we seek, the wellbeing approach can contribute to decision making in difficult financial times. An important aspect of this approach is that not just new but existing programmes would come under the budgetary spotlight. We heard evidence that while there is energy and enthusiasm for new initiatives, this is rarely matched by a willingness to discontinue older programmes that may well have outlived their usefulness. If the rule is that if a policy or programme does not contribute to agreed outcomes it will not be funded it will become clear what can be dropped thus freeing up resources for activities which will contribute to those outcomes as well as giving a new way to explore and compare the benefits of new initiatives.

7.7 Local Government Reform and Community Planning

The most far-reaching changes since the early 1970s are currently taking place in local government.

[78] Pidgeon, C., Linking budgets to outcomes: international experience Northern Ireland Assembly Research and Information Service: Northern Ireland Assembly, 2012.

The Executive's vision for local government reform is of *'. . . a strong, dynamic local government creating communities that are vibrant, healthy, prosperous, safe, sustainable and have the needs of all citizens at their core.'*[79] Community planning lies at the heart of this vision – the Roundtable believes that the introduction of community planning is a crucial opportunity to take a people focused and place-based approach to wellbeing.

Departmental guidance states: *'Central to the Executive's vision for the local government sector is the provision of high quality, efficient services that respond to the needs of people and continuously improve over time. Critical to the delivery of this objective will be an effective, statute-based community planning process led and facilitated by the new councils.'*[80]

This is to be achieved through the introduction of local council-led community planning partnerships which are intended to focus on improving wellbeing at a local level. The legislation describes community planning as 'a process by which the council and its community planning partners . . . identify long-term objectives [actions and functions] for improving -

i. the social wellbeing of the district;
ii. the economic well-being of the district; and
iii. the environmental wellbeing of the district; and *'identify long-term objectives [actions and functions] …for contributing to the achievement of sustainable development . . .'*[81]

Departmental guidance describes community planning as *'a process led by councils in conjunction with partners and communities to develop and implement a shared vision for their area, a long term vision which relates to all aspects of community life and which also involves working together to plan and deliver better services which make a real difference to people's lives.'*[82]

The alignment of the vision and practice of community planning with the key themes in this report is clear as is the emphasis on outcomes. One of the key principles established in the guidance is: *'A Focus on Outcomes: Community planning provides an opportunity to focus on the longer term and shared outcomes which will benefit the quality of life of communities. Partnership working towards these shared outcomes should lead to better co-ordination and use of resources across the public sector and more effective accountability. It will enable community planning partners to focus on local issues whilst also ensuring alignment to regional priorities and strategies.'*[83]

The process is clearly designed to achieve horizontal integration amongst all those responsible for local delivery and with a stake in delivery: local councils, statutory agencies and voluntary and community sector bodies. However, 'ensuring alignment to regional priorities and strategies' poses two key challenges. First, unless those regional priorities and strategies are themselves working towards shared outcomes, community planning partnerships may find themselves seeking to satisfy

[79] Guidance to Councils: Community Planning Foundation Programme Department of the Environment NI: Belfast 2013 www. http://www.doeni.gov.uk/community_planning_foundation_programme_-_oct_2013.pdf [accessed February, 2015]
[80] Ibid
[81] Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 paragraph 66, The Stationery Office http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2014/8/contents/enacted
[82] Guidance to Councils: Community Planning Foundation Programme Department of the Environment NI: Belfast, 2013. http://www.doeni.gov.uk/community_planning_foundation_programme_-_oct_2013.pdf [accessed February, 2015]
[83] Ibid

higher level goals originating with departments or NDPBs that may be weakly aligned or even in conflict with each other. Horizontal integration across central government is as important as at local government level. Secondly, were such integration at the centre to be the norm, it would not necessarily follow that such shared outcomes would flow down to and inform outcomes at the local level.

The first of these challenges is addressed above in section 7.5 Strategic Integration, the proposed Wellbeing Framework providing the necessary process and structure. The second challenge has been addressed in Scotland through the use of Single Outcome Agreements (SOA) between the Scottish Government and each local authority-led community planning partnership. Partners agree strategic priorities for their local area and then deliver these priorities, individually or jointly, focussing on agreed outcomes. SOAs need to show clearly how locally agreed outcomes contribute to the Scottish National outcomes and are required to be supported by robust performance management arrangements.

While these agreements are well established in Scotland, the new Northern Ireland councils have significantly fewer powers than their Scottish counterparts and it may be argued that use of SOAs is therefore less appropriate; education and social services for example, are both local authority responsibilities in Scotland. Although community planning partnerships here will deliver a similar range of services, it will be the statutory partners who will be responsible for the bulk of that delivery. Nevertheless, because SOAs are between an entire community planning partnership and central government rather than solely a local council and the centre, SOAs do appear to have worthwhile potential for directly and formally aligning community planning to the outcomes and indicators identified in the Wellbeing Framework and implementation via the Programme for Government.[84]

The formal approach of Single Outcome Agreements will also help both local and central government to be rigorous about the future of the many other partnership bodies that exist, the need for a number of which will be removed as community planning is fully implemented.

The scale of the challenge of aligning central and local government should not be underestimated, however. A recent report from Audit Scotland states:

> *'The Scottish Government is now starting to use existing performance management and accountability arrangements to monitor the contribution of public bodies to community planning. But it is not yet consistently holding central government bodies or the NHS to account for their performance within CPPs.' [Community Planning Partnerships]*

After more than a decade, community planning in Scotland still has a distance to travel, a distance that we might shorten significantly in Northern Ireland by learning from the Scottish experience.

[84] Community Planning: Turning Ambition into Action Audit Scotland: Edinburgh 2014. http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/docs/central/2014/nr_141127_community_planning.pdf [accessed February, 2015]

The kinds of reforms described above both rely on and can help engender a change in the culture of relationships between central and local government. We heard from some stakeholders that the traditional relationship has been an unhelpfully unequal one like that of 'parent-child' with local authorities expected to 'report-in'. Local government reform together with the Wellbeing Framework was seen as an opportunity to make that relationship a more mature one in pursuit of common goals. Importantly, these are seen as goals that are not dictated by the centre but could equally flow upwards through the community planning process.

7.8 Prevention

An important approach in support of wellbeing outcomes is a much greater focus on prevention ranging from upstream activities to avoid problems arising in the first place through early intervention to early remedial treatment. While this concept is most familiar in the health sphere, it is relevant across government, from keeping young people out of the judicial system, to pollution prevention and early years interventions for children in families at risk.

The financial benefits of preventative approaches are well recognised – it being almost invariably cheaper to prevent a problem than to solve it – but there are challenges in that it is rarely possible to remove funding from services designed to react to current problems to avoid those in the future; return on investment is often long term and well beyond a single political mandate; and the financial benefits often accrue to a different part of the system to that which made the investment in the first place.[85] For example, it has often been argued by NGOs that a modal shift in transport from the private car to walking and cycling would have long-term health benefits and therefore savings to the health service. The fact that these benefits are long term and do not offer a return to the department making the investment means that we are yet to see such a modal shift.

The long-term focus of the Wellbeing Framework combined with the proposals on outcomes budgeting can support a shift towards prevention so that the preventive approach moves from being a frequently low priority to being a key means of improving outcomes for citizens.

7.9 Co-production

David Boyle and Michael Harris developed the following as a working definition of co-production: *'Co-production means delivering public services in an equal and reciprocal relationship between professionals, people using services, their families and their neighbours. Where activities are co-produced in this way, both services and neighbourhoods become far more effective agents of change.'*[86]

Boyle describes three basic ideas behind co-production. The first is that those delivering services need the service users as much as the other way around. He cites Elinor Ostrom's research where she discovered that the reason that crime rates went up in Chicago when the police were taken off

[85] Wallace, J., The Rise of the Enabling State: A review of policy and evidence across the UK and Ireland Carnegie UK Trust: Dunfermline (2013). http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/2013/the-rise-of-the-enabling-state [accessed February, 2015]

[86] Boyle, D. and Harris, M., *The Challenge of Co-production: How equal partnerships between professionals and the public are crucial to improving public services* NESTA: London, 2009. http://www.nesta.org.uk/sites/default/files/the_challenge_of_co-production.pdf [accessed Feb. 2015]

the beat and put in patrol cars was that the link with the public was broken. People felt that their intelligence and support was no longer needed.

The second idea is that service users are also assets. Boyle cites the example of Rushey Green Timebank in London. Based at a GPs' surgery, a network of cooperation and care has strengthened the resilience and health of surgery users thus relieving pressures on the health service.

The third idea is that *'all this local activity, parents bringing up children, looking after older people, making neighbourhoods work, is not some magically inexhaustible resource outside the economic system. It is what makes the rest of the economy possible.'*[87]

Co-production is also often misunderstood and is seen by some as a partnership between the public sector and third sector in delivering services. Vital as this is, it is not by itself something that taps into the energies of individuals and communities to improve their wellbeing and recognises the active role they have to play rather than being passive recipients of a service whether it is delivered by the public, private or third sector. Co-production has a dual benefit: it helps improve services, thus improving wellbeing, by involving people in their design and it creates wellbeing through the social interaction and physical activity generated through involvement in delivery.

The Carnegie Trust's work on the Enabling State in 2012-13 found that development of co-production in Northern Ireland is very limited compared with other parts of the UK and Ireland. [88] There has been some recent work on time-banking but there is clearly huge untapped potential for co-production to help deliver wellbeing. In Northern Ireland, the work on time-banking is led by Volunteer Now.

7.10 Assets-based Approaches to Wellbeing

Related to both prevention and co-production is the concept of an assets-based approach to wellbeing. This idea is rooted in the belief that communities are more usefully defined by their strengths than their weaknesses. The concern is that when we seek to improve wellbeing, we alight on what the data is telling us about deficits in a community – poor health, for example – and then design interventions to close the gap with the national average. This is summed up by the Glasgow Centre for Population Health:

> *'For too long, it can be argued, professionals have concentrated on the problems, needs and deficiencies within communities. How we understand health and wellbeing determines the way we respond to it. Typically, a community is seen from the perspective of its largest deficit. Assessing and building the strengths of individuals and the assets of a community opens the door to new ways of thinking about improving health and of responding to poor health.'*[89]

[87] Ibid

[88] Oliver, Q The Enabling State in Northern Ireland Carnegie UK Trust Dunfermline, 2013. http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/2013/the-enabling-state-in-northern-ireland. [accessed February, 2015]

[89] Foot J., Hopkins, T., A glass half full: how an asset approach can promote community health and wellbeing Improvement and Development Agency: London 2010 quoted in Asset based approaches for health improvement: redressing the balance Glasgow Centre for Public Health Glasgow, 2011 http://www.gcph.co.uk/assets/0000/2627/GCPH_Briefing_Paper_CS9web.pdf [accessed February, 2015]

In practical terms, such assets are described as:

- the practical skills, capacity and knowledge of local residents
- the passions and interests of local people that give the energy to change
- the networks and connections in a community
- the effectiveness of local community and voluntary associations
- the resources of public, private and third sector organisations that are available to support a community
- the physical and economic resources of a place that enhance wellbeing.[90]

This is an intuitively appealing approach with a growing body of evidence to back it up. It is an important counterpoint to an outcomes-based approach if it takes only problems as its starting point.

[90] Asset based approaches for health improvement: redressing the balance Glasgow Centre for Public Health Glasgow, 2011 http://www.gcph.co.uk/assets/0000/2627/GCPH_Briefing_Paper_CS9web.pdf [accessed February, 2015]

8. Scrutiny

Trust in the Government is a key component of wellbeing, but the OECD cites it as one of the top three challenges facing parties in charge. Improving trust in the Government and confidence in the judgements it makes about its own performance, should be a priority. Meaningful scrutiny is therefore crucial to a Wellbeing Framework.

Scrutiny of public services must strike the right balance in terms of holding people and organisations to account for the delivery of change, while promoting an open dialogue in which everyone – including the people who are tasked with delivery – can be honest about what works and what does not. Scrutiny will need to focus on the economic and non-economic sources of wellbeing and the trade-offs that form the basis of policy and resource debates.

Integrated scrutiny of the Executive would serve two purposes. It would improve trust in the Executive generally by stimulating constructive scrutiny focused on understanding trends in social progress rather than facilitating a culture of blame. And it would improve the Executive's own self-regulatory function by encouraging a questioning approach to understand the underlying causes of shifts in the wellbeing framework.

To this end, the Executive should lay an annual report before the Northern Ireland Assembly on the progress made by the Programme for Government towards outcomes described in the Wellbeing Framework, followed by a debate in Stormont.

8.1 Scrutiny by Assembly Committees

The Scottish Government has recently introduced Performance Scorecards to improve accountability to parliamentary committees.[91] Each committee receives a separate scorecard that collates the indicators from the National Performance Framework most likely to be of interest to it. Because of the strategic nature of the national outcomes, there is inevitably overlap and committees are free to consider the package of scorecards as a whole.

The Education and Culture Committee receives a scorecard describing progress on 11 of the 50 national indicators. For each indicator, a graph of trend data is given. In the most recent report, two indicators were 'performance improving' while nine were 'performance maintaining' or static.[92] The Health and Sport committee received information on 23 indicators of which nine were improving, eight were maintaining and six were 'performance worsening'. Each scorecard has hyperlinks to further information on each indicator which enable committees to easily access more detail.[93] Committees are then in a better informed position to be able to examine the effectiveness of government policies and programmes and, crucially, to explore answers to the question 'why?' Whether things are improving or worsening, the answer to this question is vital in deciding what

[91] *Scotland Performs Update* Scottish Government: Edinburgh 2014. http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Government/Finance/18127/scotland-performs-update-1 [accessed Feb. 2015]

[92] Ibid

[93] Ibid

should happen next.

Assembly committees would be in a position to directly engage with the Wellbeing Framework and monitor the progress of the Programme for Government if a similar approach was taken and supported by the Assembly's Research and Information Service.

8.2 The Northern Ireland Audit Office and the Public Accounts Committee

The Roundtable concluded that the current focus of scrutiny on the processes associated with financial governance fails to adequately concentrate on outcomes for the public. The Audit Office has a dual role of ensuring both financial probity and value for money in the public sector. It is in the sphere of value for money that the Roundtable feels there is considerable scope for the skills and expertise of the Audit Office to be brought to bear in scrutinising Departments on the basis of outcomes set out in the Wellbeing Framework and the Programme for Government.

The Roundtable heard from a range of people with different perspectives on this issue. The common thread appears to be a certain frustration with a system that focuses on processes while failing to assess whether a policy or programme actually made a difference. This approach is compounded somewhat by some of the work of the Public Accounts Committee, and associated media coverage, that is often adversarial in nature rather than focused on a shared endeavour. As such, the current scrutiny suppresses innovation and the partnership working which is necessary to promote real societal change.

The Roundtable believes that the Audit Office would respond positively to the challenge of scrutiny focused on outcomes, taking a long-term view and supporting preventative approaches, for example. Care needs to be taken, however, in holding public servants to account for outcomes over which they may have only limited control. Thus the focus of scrutiny must be on the effectiveness of the contributory relationship between activities and outcomes rather than expecting government action to single-handedly reduce CO_2 emissions, for example, when factors outside of its control, such as the weather, come into play.

8.3 Local Government Scrutiny

Secondary legislation flowing from the Local Government Act (NI) 2014 will provide for a new performance improvement regime for local councils.[94] Initially, it will be focused on planning, economic development and waste, but it is intended that this will expand to take account of changes brought about by the next Programme for Government. The proposed indicators and standards will support an outcomes-based approach and the link with community planning is explicitly recognised both in the draft Order and draft DOE Statutory Guidance on Community Planning.[95] The vision is clearly of an outcomes-focused performance management framework that covers the range of functions necessary for the delivery of community plans.

[94] *Draft Guidance for Local Government Performance Improvement 2015: Consultation Document*, Department of the Environment NI: Belfast 2014 www.http://www.doeni.gov.uk/final_consultation_document_-_draft_guidance_for_local_government_performance_improvement_2015.pdf [accessed Feb. 2015]

[95] *Draft Statutory Guidance for the Operation Of Community Planning Local Government Act (Northern Ireland)* 2014Department of the Environment NI: Belfast 2014 www. http://www.doeni.gov.uk/do1_14_529691__annex_a_-_public_consultation_document_-_draft_statutory_guidance_for_the_operation_of_community_planning_2015_2_.pdf [accessed February 2015]

Audit will be by the Local Government Auditor within the NIAO, but it is evident that a local council cannot be held to account for the performance of its statutory community planning partners whose audit trail will be through parent departments. The Wellbeing Framework, however, presents an opportunity to integrate the kind of outcomes-based approach to audit advocated for central government with that for local government, an opportunity for an integrated approach to audit both horizontally across departments and vertically between central and local government.

9. Supporting a Wellbeing Framework

9.1 Capacity Building

Implementing a Wellbeing Framework for Northern Ireland is part of a broader paradigm shift towards an outcomes-based, preventative approach to public services. These changes are not primarily in the structures of public services but rather in their culture. Such a shift takes time and needs to be supported. A programme of training and capacity building should be developed to support the Wellbeing Framework. At a minimum, this should include training for Assembly members, local government officials and elected members, civil servants and managers in partner organisations such as the third sector.

In practical terms, the programme would range from development of existing training programmes to seminars at the Assembly with visiting experts and staff exchanges with other devolved administrations and internationally.

The kinds of issues that such training and capacity building should address include both policy and operational matters, for example:

- Drawing on existing specialisms in policy development to build a collective understanding of what is actually happening on the ground – understanding the evidence base
- Learning what has worked and what hasn't worked in other jurisdictions when tackling similar issues
- Understanding the relationship between the Wellbeing Framework, the Programme for Government and Community Plans, how shared outcomes are implemented, where responsibility lies and how progress is measured
- Adopting a common language so that there is clarity and agreement on the distinction between inputs, outputs, indicators and outcomes, for example
- The use of Logic Models
- New policy appraisal methodologies
- Budgeting for outcomes.

Policy development in a small devolved jurisdiction such as ours is always a challenge with government departments lacking the numbers of personnel available to larger entities. It is vital that policy making capacity is maintained and enhanced. Independent research, advice and challenge from 'think tanks' is routinely available to governments of whatever political stripe at national levels. There is a need to explore how we can develop such independent think tanks here to generate a richness of debate.

The role of policy officers in third sector organisations, of which there are many, could be examined to see if this resource might have potential to maximise its impact perhaps through more collaborative

working. Such a development would mirror the kind of collaboration we envisage across the government.

An approach being developed by the School of Law at Queen's University and Schumacher Ireland involves establishing a series of communities of practice across civil society and government. The aim is to maximise the democratic potential of community planning alongside civic participation in the development of the Wellbeing Framework and its implementation through future Programmes for Government. The programme will support participants from central government, local government and the third sector to engage creatively, deeply and effectively in an emerging process of public innovation and participative democracy.

9.2 Managing Complexity and Uncertainty

What Works Centres

In his recent report 'Wellbeing and Policy' former UK Cabinet Secretary, Sir Gus O'Donnell, with characteristic frankness, wrote: *'At the moment, much policymaking is based on little more than a hunch.'*[96] Hunches, or intuition, have their place of course, but an evidence-based approach to policymaking is now widely recognised as essential. This is particularly important when we are increasingly attempting to manage complexity and uncertainty, partly because the challenges that face society are increasingly complex and uncertain, and also because we are more aware of these conditions than we have been in the past.

The UK Government has recently launched a series of independent specialist evidence centres for social policy known as What Works Centres. The Roundtable heard evidence on the establishment of the What Works Wellbeing Centre and we believe that it will provide significant additional information that will help a move forward to changing practice.[97] In simple terms, this helps avoid both reinvention of the wheel and the repetition of unsuccessful initiatives, alongside the opportunity to build on the work of others and share experience. The Carnegie UK Trust and School of Law at Queens University Belfast have been holding discussions to ensure that What Works Wellbeing includes a focus on devolved governments' activities, as well as the UK as a whole.

The Scottish Government has recently established What Works Scotland in partnership with the Universities of Edinburgh and Glasgow.[98] It aims *'to improve the way local areas in Scotland use evidence to make decisions about public service development and reform . . . working with specific Community Planning Partnerships involved in the design and delivery of public service . . .'.* Specific objectives include learning what is and what isn't working in a local area, encouraging collaborative learning with a range of local authority, business, public sector and community partners, better understanding of what effective policy interventions and effective services look like, promoting the use of evidence in planning and service delivery, helping organisations get the skills and knowledge they need to use and interpret evidence, and creating case studies for wider sharing and sustainability.

[96] O'Donnell, G., Wellbeing and Policy Legatum Institute: London 2014

[97] What Works Centre for Wellbeing http://whatworkswellbeing.org/ [accessed February, 2015]

[98] What Works Scotland http://whatworksscotland.ac.uk/ [accessed February, 2015]

There is scope for a similar collaboration between our two universities and the Executive perhaps including a policy lab role (see below) such as that established in Warwick University.

Collaboration between jurisdictions

Another initiative that champions the use of evidence in social policy and practice is the Alliance for Useful Evidence – an open-access network of individuals from across government, universities, charities, business and local authorities in the UK and internationally.[99] There is a particular emphasis on sharing evidence across the four jurisdictions of the UK and a member of staff has recently been appointed in Northern Ireland.

We would encourage sharing of lessons and collaboration with the Republic of Ireland, Scotland, Wales, England and across Europe at central and local government levels, including the use of North-South and East-West bodies. For example, departments should actively engage with UK Government What Works Centres, What Works Scotland and the Economic and Social Research Institute in Dublin. The Centre for Cross Border Studies could have a role here in supporting dissemination of lessons across the island of Ireland. It is important that the Wellbeing Framework is an outward-looking and evidence-informed mechanism for reform.

Policy labs

The concept of design in public services was pretty much unknown until relatively recently, although it is normal practice in the private sector for producing both products and services. The Danish Government has been a leader in this through its Mind Lab which in turn has influenced similar ventures including the Cabinet Office's Policy Lab UK pilot.[100] Simon Brindle, Welsh Government Head of Policy Profession, writes: *'The Danes have developed a strong track record of scanning for alternative approaches, prototyping, beta-testing and adapting policy.'* Finance Minister, Simon Hamilton MLA, was impressed by his visit to Mind Lab in Copenhagen, saying: '*. . . I am keen to apply its techniques in particular how best to involve people in creating new solutions to long-standing problems in society.'*[101]

The Minister's reference to involving people in creating solutions lies at the heart of the policy lab approach. It is not just about design but co-design, recognising that those who are likely to have the greatest insight into how a service should be designed are the users of that service. Policy labs also take an ethnographic approach – seeking to understand the cultural contexts in which people live and the 'webs of meaning' that constitute their lives. This approach recognises the complexity of the systems in which policy seeks to make benign interventions while developing innovative means of dealing with that complexity.

[99] Alliance for Useful Evidence http://www.alliance4usefulevidence.org/ [accessed February, 2015]

[100] Mind Lab http://mind-lab.dk/en/ [accessed February, 2015]

[101] Department of Finance and Personnel News Release (2013) http://www.northernireland.gov.uk/index/media-centre/news-departments/news-dfp/news-dfp-december-2013/news-dfp-101213-hamilton-discusses-public.htm [accessed February, 2015]

9.3 Policy Appraisal

A focus on achieving wellbeing outcomes for citizens poses particular challenges for policy appraisal. The shortcomings of conventional cost-benefit analysis (CBA) in informing policy choices in social programmes where outcomes are not easily converted into monetary units, is well known. If policy appraisal is to result in policies and programmes that deliver wellbeing rather than ones that simply pass a test of economic competence, then new methodologies need to be considered. This is not to say that conventional cost-benefit analysis does not have a place. For instance, costs and benefits can be easily expressed in monetary terms or can be inferred by people's willingness-to-pay (for things they pay for such as transport as opposed to highly questionable inferences from how much people are willing to pay to protect a golden eagle, for example). Where it falls down, however, is that it often undervalues or excludes many of the things that matter most to wellbeing.

There are two policy appraisal methodologies that have the potential to help us make better informed choices. The first is a form of social CBA that uses life satisfaction data to estimate the impacts of a particular policy on subjective well-being. This assumes that wellbeing can be compared from person to person and therefore it is possible to take the wellbeing gains to those that benefit from a policy or intervention, subtract the wellbeing costs experienced by those who are adversely affected and then subtract the monetary cost of the intervention. If the result is positive, the policy is worth pursuing[102]. The methodology would also enable policymakers to compare the potential of policy options. This appears to be essentially a technical exercise that seeks to be as objective as conventional CBA purports to be, but relying on data that is directly relevant to the outcome sought. The BRAINPOoL research describes this as sharing with conventional CBA a 'totalising' approach in that they both *'attempt to derive an aggregate result by summing individual impacts according to a common unity of value.'*[103]

The second methodology is known as multiple criteria analysis (MCA) and is described in the BRAINPOoL research as an approach that aims to 'explicitly recognise the irreducible multi-dimensionality of decision-making, and to make the process of deciding how trade-offs are made an explicit and transparent part of the methodology'.[104] The UK Department of Transport uses five criteria to assess projects: integration, accessibility, environmental impact and safety. These are measured and scored according to monetary and non-monetary values as appropriate. This enables trade-offs between objectives to be seen. Criteria can also be weighted. The DCLG manual on the subject says that weighting *'should be recognised explicitly rather than implicitly; the choice is ultimately political . . . By conducting the analysis in an iterative and reflexive fashion, the model can both shape thinking and be shaped by thinking in an evolving social process that involves all the key players.'*[105]

BRAINPOoL concludes: *'Thus, far from undemocratically replacing political judgements with technocratic analysis . . . MCA and related methods have the potential to illuminate debates about trade-offs, making them more democratic and transparent, rather than allowing trade-offs to be made*

[102] O'Donnell, G, *Wellbeing and Policy* Legatum Institute: London, 2014

[103] Berry, C., Seaford, C., Beyond GDP: From Measurement to Politics and Policy Briefing Paper for Workshops and Final Conference BRAINPOoL: London 2014 www. http://www.brainpoolproject.eu/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/BRAINPOoL-Final-Conference-Background-Paper-FINAL.pdf

[104] Ibid

[105] Ibid

implicitly and opaquely on the basis of hidden assumptions – as often happens with conventional CBA.'[106] MCA is seen as complementary to CBA, as its strength lies in assessing policy options against each other rather than assessing whether the costs outweigh the benefits in an absolute sense.

MCA often includes stakeholder engagement where it can take on board different interests and there is even evidence that it can help build consensus as the choices and reasons for making them are rendered more transparent.

The kind of cultural change needed to underpin the wellbeing framework advocated in this report will not come about unless the rules are changed as well. Revisions to the Green Book could help drive the necessary change and remove some of the barriers that can tend to stifle the innovation and risk that can often be lacking in public services. The use of these new methodologies can not only lead to better business cases based on hard data as well as value judgements, but to dynamic political engagement alongside public participation – important outcomes in themselves.

9.4 Logic Modelling

Logic modelling is a useful tool that is becoming well-established in the Scottish public sector. It is a vital support in ensuring that the activities of government and its partners actually contribute to agreed outcomes. If resources are to be rigorously focused on wellbeing outcomes, there needs to be a clear path from the problem to be addressed and planned inputs such as staff time and money, through to the long term outcomes. Logic modelling enables managers to plan accordingly and those who hold them to account to do so with a clear understanding of how resources deployed contribute to achieving outcomes.

As the name implies, this is a relatively straightforward approach, but one that requires training and use if it is to become an embedded way of working in support of wellbeing outcomes. Figure 9.1 shows the logic model process, the critical point being to start at the right of the diagram and move to the left – in other words when planning or evaluating a policy or programme, start with the intended long term outcome and work backwards through shorter term outcomes, outputs (or activities) to inputs. This helps to enforce the rule that only activities that can show how they contribute to agreed outcomes will be funded. These outcomes may be at the level of a particular strategy but ultimately they would demonstrably contribute to the outcomes in the Wellbeing Framework much as described for Scotland's Justice Strategy (see Figure 9.2).[107]

[106] Ibid

[107] The Strategy for Justice in Scotland Scottish Government: Edinburgh 2012 www. http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2012/09/5924 [accessed Feb. 2015]

Figure 9.1 The Logic Model Template

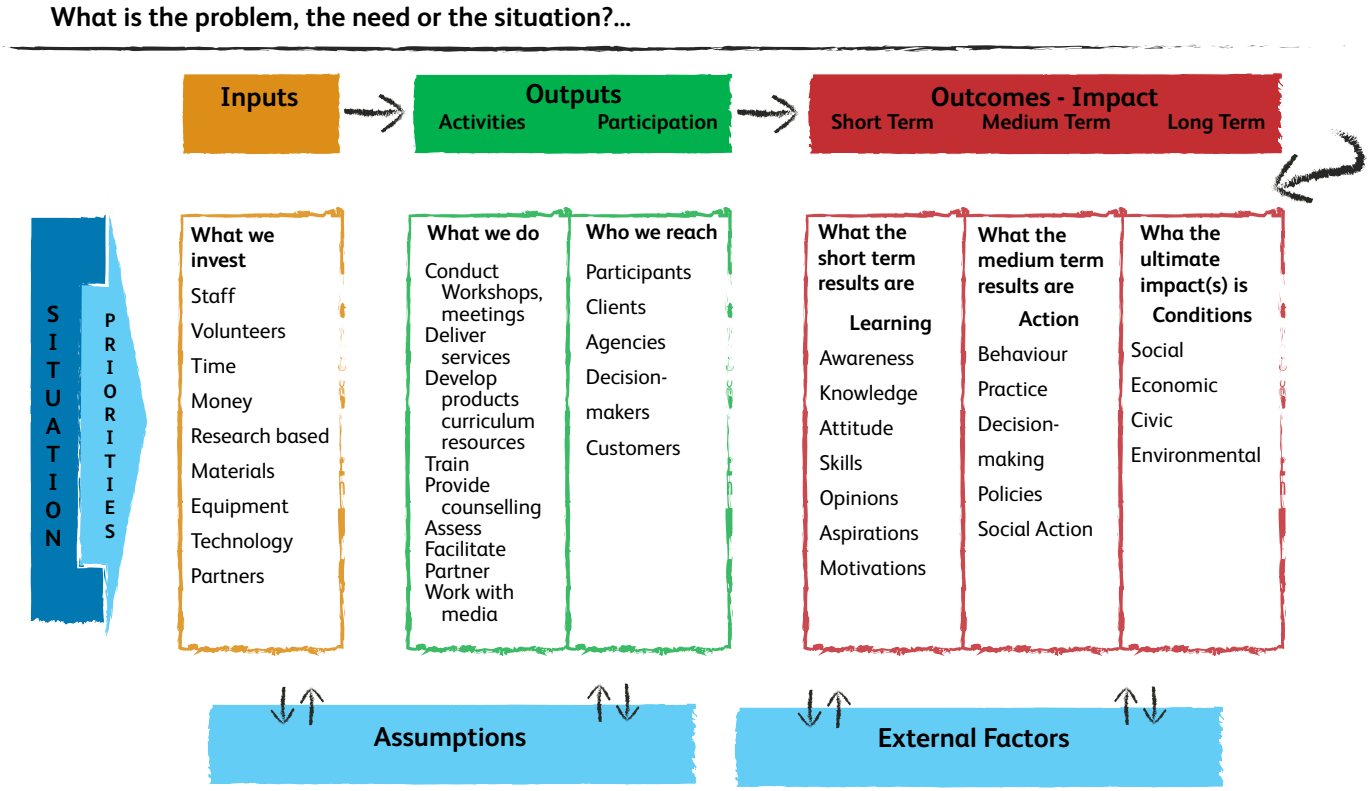
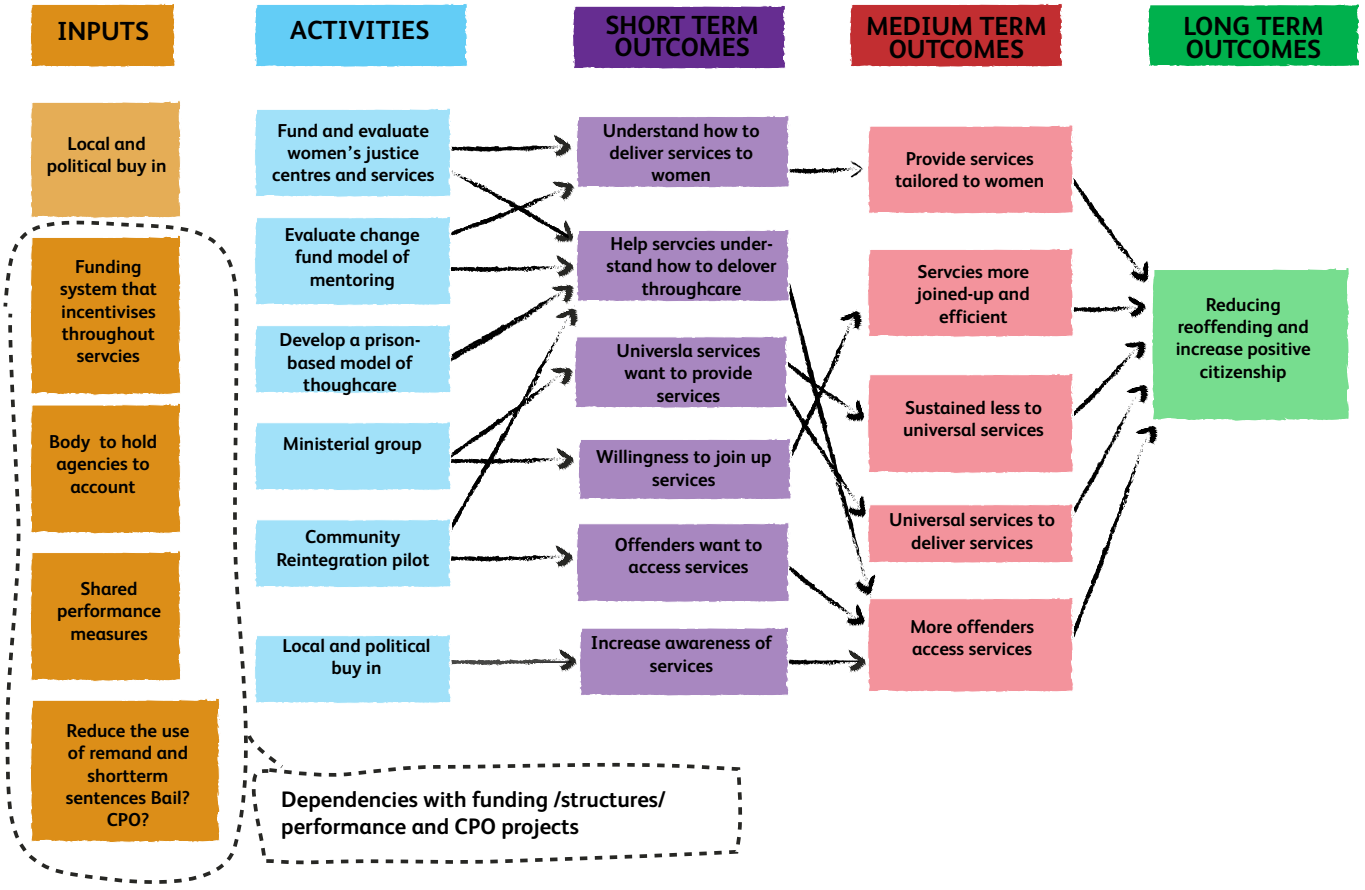


Figure 9.4.2 A logic model for women's throughcare in the Scottish justice system



9.5 Evaluation of Policies and Programmes

A focus on outcomes and the use of a range of indicators enables good information to be collected and a clear focus on results. This, in turn, provides an opportunity for rigorous evaluation of what government does. A World Bank study of a move from outputs to outcomes by 12 countries, including the UK and Ireland, found that there was a need for more attention to evaluation:

> *'Evaluation is required to assess the continuing relevance and appropriateness of strategies and programs, and to provide information about all types of impacts, including unintended or unexpected consequences. Evaluation also can identify the continued appropriateness of objectives and of indicators used for monitoring. Evaluation is needed to demonstrate causality or attribution, to determine if the program intervention was indeed responsible for any documented results. Perhaps most importantly, evaluation can provide "why" and "how" information that is needed for an understanding of how and in what circumstances a program approach "works" or does not, and what would be needed to be able to learn from what has happened and to make informed decisions on future actions.'*[108]

Logic modelling can make a valuable contribution to evaluation practice and answering the basic questions: 'What worked, what didn't, why?' and 'How can we make it better?' It does this by ensuring that programmes are properly designed in the first place, by showing that a programme is ready for evaluation and by being based on a clear theory of change necessary to be able to test the programme's success.

This is a particularly appropriate approach when outcomes are influenced by a wide range of factors which is almost invariably the case. Seeking to establish causality or attribution can be extremely difficult and often misleading. Logic modelling is consistent with the use of methodologies such as contribution analysis which infers causality, *'not definitive proof, but rather provides evidence and a line of reasoning from which we can draw a plausible conclusion that, within some level of confidence, the program has made an important contribution to the documented results.'*[109]

9.6 Statistical Support

The successful implementation of a Wellbeing Framework will require significant statistical support. The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency has been expanding its activities to include the collation of wellbeing data in one place. In June, 2014, it published UK National Wellbeing Measures: Northern Ireland Data June, 2014[110] which provided Northern Ireland level data for most of the 41 wellbeing measures previously developed by the Office for National Statistics. There are some gaps where NI data will be collected differently or is not collected at all, but the exercise is a very useful starting point for collating the datasets needed to underpin the Framework. While the data needed both for evidence-based policy and monitoring progress towards wellbeing outcomes are potentially considerable, we understand that the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA), which

[108] Perrin, Bruce *Moving from Outputs to Outcomes: Practical Advice from Governments Around the World* World Bank, 2005

[109] Better Evaluation http://betterevaluation.org/plan/approach/contribution_analysis [accessed February, 2015]

[110] UK National Wellbeing Measures: Northern Ireland Data June 2014 NISRA: Belfast 2014 http://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/archive/uk-national-wellbeing-measures-northern-ireland-data-june-2014.pdf [accessed February, 2015]

provides statistics and research support to government, will prioritise the collection and analysis for these data within its work programmes. There is also a great deal of wellbeing data held by other parts of government and in the third sector that could be helpful.

There are, of course, technical issues in the availability of some of the data that we would like to see collected as part of a Wellbeing Framework. These include:

- how we measure and value unpaid work
- how we measure the quality and security of employment
- how we include the experiences of children and young people
- how inequalities are reflected in the framework.

There will be instances where the statistics simply aren't currently available to track progress towards a given outcome. Rather than give up on the outcome because it is not easily measurable – the classic error whereby things that matter are often not measured and are therefore ignored – proxies can be an effective alternative. In Scotland, for example, children's dental health is used as a proxy indicator or 'indicative measure' of children's general health and the quality of early years care.[111]

[111] Scotland Performs http://www.scotland.gov.uk/About/Performance/scotPerforms/indicator/dental [accessed February, 2015]

10. The Roundtable Recommendations: Rationale

1.Integrate the concept of wellbeing as our collective purpose into its mission statement for all public services as part of the 2016-2021 Programme for Government.

Wellbeing, especially a societal understanding of wellbeing drawing on the capability approach, can provide an important over-arching and textured language that can carry forward a strong sense of shared purpose and direction for our governance arrangements. A Wellbeing Framework, with a focus on outcomes, can support a more engaged and transparent citizen-focused Programme for Government.

2. Lead a society-wide conversation on wellbeing which feeds into the development of the Wellbeing Framework.

Our approach entails the need for the Executive – or parts thereof – to take the lead in the conversation on wellbeing, facilitating a shared narrative with wellbeing as a focus, and committing to both the necessary outcomes and the beginning of a transformation in the relationship between government, citizen and communities.

3. Agree a set of strategic commitments and outcomes (the Wellbeing Framework) and place this at the core of the 2016-2021 Programme for Government.

A Wellbeing Framework and narrative that informs a high-level statement of purpose, can provide a platform to support the strategic commitments set out in upcoming Programmes for Government. With an outcomes-focus set alongside a commitment do 'doing things differently', including a renewed commitment to citizen engagement in the policy design and realisation process, we view the Framework as the core element in a living process.

4. Set out, through the future Programmes for Government, the reforms required to achieve the Wellbeing Framework, including a whole-of-government operational culture.

Drawing on the learning from important innovations such as *Delivering Social Change*, and building on Public Sector and Local Government reform processes, the Roundtable has concluded that a wellbeing focus in Northern Ireland invites an opportunity to promote a culture shift across government, and to introduce 'new ways of doing things. This should begin with measures to release a more collaborative style of policy design and realisation, including a deeper engagement with citizens and thought leaders, through co-design and co-production.

5. Develop a training and capacity building programme for all those bodies responsible for implementation.

Doing things differently implies a need for new capacity, training, and support. Organisations are also systems of communication, with embedded cues, conventions and disciplines that are not always

named. The Roundtable has been impressed by the reforms initiated in a highly creative partnership between the senior civil service and legislators in Scotland. There are lessons to be drawn from the nature of this engagement, which has also extended – in the context of Scotland Performs – to partnership with local government and civil society. All of this will demand capacity-building and support for the adoption of new ways of relating across government departments and agencies, and to ways of navigating the transition to an outcomes-focused framework. Methodologies and tools are available to support the transition. The success of the transition will turn, however, on the ability of the Executive to embrace and disseminate a clear sense of shared purpose and direction, focused on the wellbeing of citizens and communities. An over-arching systems approach to government, understood as a single organisation, will go a long way towards a new way of doing things, and embedding the culture of a highly adaptive and resilient 'learning organisation'.

6. Embed the Wellbeing Framework by linking it to collaborative budget processes and designing it to inform informing the allocation process.

A Wellbeing Framework with an outcomes focus will provide an opportunity to enhance the coherence and transparency around budgetary processes. A feature of the wellbeing approach is the opportunity to revisit basic assumptions about what works and what doesn't, including a new focus on prevention rather than compensating for societal failures in areas such as poor health, the far-reaching impacts of inequality, and unsustainable environmental practices in areas such as resource management.

7. Work with local government to agree a new relationship to fully integrate and monitor local outcomes within the context of the Wellbeing Framework by mutual agreement.

The Roundtable has identified local government reform as a compelling opportunity for the Executive to engage with local government around wellbeing. The Wellbeing Framework offers a unique opportunity to align work and investments prioritized by the Executive and local government on the basis of mutual agreements and understandings of mutual contributions to societal wellbeing. The example of Scotland's Single Outcome Agreements and protocols agreed between central government and local government offer possible templates for consideration here. A key challenge here will be the design of an effective mechanism capable of institutionalizing a collaborative set of relationships between the centre and local government.

8. Invest in communicating the Wellbeing Framework and trend data to the public by a range of techniques including data visualisation, live dashboards, social and traditional media.

Communication is a key function of the proposed Wellbeing Framework. Innovative social technologies for the engagement of citizens in the policy and decision-making processes of government (co-production, co-design, collaboration) can play a role in embedding an ongoing conversation around priority outcomes and the tough decisions or trade-offs that accompany the business of government. In addition, ongoing two-communication on the progress of outcomes and indicators, in near real time, is now possible through imaginative use of new technologies, social

media, and data visualisation. All of this is supportive of an invigorated and engaged citizenry, which amounts to an important contribution to wellbeing itself.

9. Lay an annual report before the Northern Ireland Assembly for debate on the progress made by the Programme for Government towards outcomes described in the Wellbeing Framework.

The proposed Wellbeing Framework supported by the cultivation of a new narrative of governance and the introduction of new ways of doing things across the public sector will only be effective in the mid- to long-term if it enjoys the legitimacy derived from high-level deliberation and contributions from legislators. For this reason, short of embedding a Framework in legislation for the time being, the Roundtable is proposing that an annual report be laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly.

10. Convene a Standing Advisory Group to provide ongoing technical support, advise on capacity-building activities and provide external review of the implementation of the Wellbeing Framework.

The Roundtable is mindful of the technical challenges that will accompany the adoption of a Wellbeing Framework and the transitions required to embed new practices within the departments and across the public sector. Equally, it has been struck by the availability of research and know-how, both locally and internationally, that can support the recommendations outlined in this report. The Roundtable is recommending that the Executive (or lead departments) consider convening a Standing Advisory Group to support the adoption and roll-out of a Framework and the accompanying reforms.

Appendix 1: Report on Focus Groups

Introduction

To assist the Roundtable in their work on Measuring Wellbeing in Northern Ireland, it was agreed that a series of focus groups would take place with representatives of different sectors of society here.

The aim was to gather the thoughts and opinions of citizens, providing them with an opportunity to become engaged with the idea of wellbeing and how it should be measured.

It was agreed that a thematic approach would be most effective to maximise the opportunity, compliment the other outreach work being undertaken and ensure that seldom heard groups are also able to contribute.

Therefore, focus groups were held with representatives from the following sectors on the following dates:

Date	Focus Group	Location
Wednesday , May 21	Ethnic Minorities	Ballymena
Friday , May 23	Older People	Belfast
Wednesday , May 28	Young People	Enniskillen
Thursday , May 29	Women	Belfast

Participants in each of the focus groups are active within their local communities and work with and support other people within that particular sector. Each group was also inclusive of different religious and political beliefs, and the locations in which the groups took place also allow us to reflect the different geographical challenges in NI.

Six key themes were addressed with each of the focus groups and the findings are detailed in the report that follows.

1. Wellbeing as a focus for the NI Executive, Local Government and partners

Is 'wellbeing' a useful focus for the Northern Ireland Executive, Local Government and partners? In what ways might it be beneficial both in general terms and in your own sphere of activity?

There was strong agreement with this theme across most of the groups, with the majority of participants expressing their belief that wellbeing would be a useful and important focus for the NI Executive, Local Government and partners.

Common across the Ethnic Minority, Older People and Women's focus groups was the feeling that any policies developed or decisions made should be done so only after full consideration of the wider impact on the lives and wellbeing of people.

Participants in each of these groups spoke about a disconnect between politicians and their (the politicians) understanding of the impact of their decisions from a wellbeing point of view, particularly where decisions involve reducing funding or support.

In each of these three groups, there was consensus that a focus on wellbeing would benefit their own sectors and communities immensely, as it would allow for a more holistic approach to policymaking and decisions.

The focus group with young people, however, was split on whether wellbeing would be a useful focus. In fact, only one of the seven participants agreed with this view. The majority of participants felt that economic growth should be the focus, particularly in terms of increasing jobs. They felt that by concentrating on this, rather than focusing on the wider issue of wellbeing, the growth of jobs and the economy would in turn lead to enhanced wellbeing.

The opposite argument was made by the focus group with representatives from the women's sector. They argued that it makes economic sense to focus on wellbeing and that good wellbeing leads to a more resilient workforce, which will, in turn, enhance the economy.

They repeated the idea that politicians need to look at what the long term impact of decisions will be and 'remind themselves why we have an economy in the first place'. They felt that the Government should be make decisions about the people, for the people and that the economy should be a means of improving the wellbeing of the population.

Other points raised include:

- By way of example of the need to look at the impact of decisions on people, one participant spoke of benefits payments. They suggested that politicians may feel that benefit payments are too high and could be cut by a few pounds. What they don't see, she said, is that those few pounds could be the only spare money a mother can use to buy her child an ice-cream or someone to go out for a cup of coffee – things which are vital for wellbeing in being able to provide something for your child or have an opportunity for social interaction;

- Participants agreed that wellbeing would be a useful focus for both the NI Executive and others in policy development;

- Meaningful consultation is needed and that issues raised must be taken seriously and followed through – not used as a 'tick box exercise'.

2. Priority challenges for wellbeing

What are the priority challenges for:

- ***Subjective wellbeing? (eg social connection, poor community relations, insecurity, identity issues, mental health, addiction etc.)***
- ***Objective wellbeing? (eg income inequality, unemployment poor environmental protection, shelter, educational under achievement etc.)***

The idea of social isolation and loneliness was discussed in detail within each of the focus groups. Participants spoke of particular challenges such as the general breakdown of communication across society, a lack of family support or traditional family relationships, lack of peer support or friendships and physical isolation due to where an individual lives.

Mental ill-health also featured highly within each of the focus groups, with concerns specifically raised about how social isolation can lead to mental ill-health and about the stigma surrounding it, leading to people not seeking help or treatment.

Fear was the final common theme amongst each of the groups, particularly among the representatives of minority ethnic communities, older people and women. Participants in these groups highlighted fears for personal safety as a significant challenge to wellbeing.

There was further discussion about fear for the future among all four focus groups as a challenge to wellbeing, driven by uncertainty over job and economic prospects and quality of life generally, particularly in the continuing period of austerity.

There was more variety in the responses about challenges to objective wellbeing, with only two particularly common themes across all four groups – unemployment and having enough money to live a comfortable life.

Each focus group also specified particular challenges that are of relevance to them:

Ethnic Minorities	Social housing
	Affordable childcare
	Language skills
Older people	Pension entitlement
	Support groups, and their funding
	Infrastructure and public transport
Young people	Lack of job prospects
	Economic growth
	Infrastructure and public transport
	Education and exams
Women	Illness
	Balancing work and family life
	Violence

Each group spoke at length about the perceived challenges to their wellbeing and, as you would expect, participants spoke in detail about the specific impact on their lives, either currently or as expected in the future.

Common across all of the focus groups were economic challenges to wellbeing and in particular the challenge of unemployment. This was particularly evident among the representatives of the ethnic minority communities and young people who were concerned about their own job prospects both now and into the future.

Wider economic growth was also highlighted by all four focus groups that identified the current financial situation as a challenge to wellbeing, with participants commenting on the reduced NI Executive budgets, welfare reform and reduced funding streams and opportunities.

The older people commented on concerns that financial constraints could impact existing initiatives, such as the free bus pass, which are vital to the wellbeing of many people.

Alongside these similarities, distinct differences in perceived challenges were also highlighted by each of the groups, reflecting individual concerns and different priorities.

These findings further cement the fact that both subjective and objective wellbeing factors are important. Wellbeing is a personal matter with contributing factors differing from individual to individual.

3. Post-conflict and legacy challenges as wellbeing issues

Do you agree with the view expressed in the report that many of the post-conflict and legacy challenges are essentially wellbeing issues that – once addressed – could unlock a more peaceful future?

There was limited support for the view that many post-conflict challenges are essentially issues of wellbeing and that if these are addressed, it could unlock a more peaceful future.

Whilst participants could understand the argument, many felt it was too simplistic and that there are wider issues at play, not only wellbeing.

There was limited discussion on this issue in each of the groups, particularly among the representatives of ethnic minority communities who did not feel particularly able to comment on the role of wellbeing in post-conflict challenges.

In the older people focus group, participants understood the view that many post-conflict challenges are issues of wellbeing, particularly in communities where such issues are to the forefront. However, they didn't comment beyond this, preferring instead to discuss other issues of wellbeing that directly impact their lives.

The young people involved in this work voiced concerns about this view, arguing that the issues are *'ingrained'* into people and this wellbeing approach may be too simplistic. They felt that time and education have a more important role in moving towards a more peaceful future and that this was not something that particularly concerned them in terms of their own wellbeing.

The group of representatives of the women's sector agreed with the view that many of the post conflict challenges are essentially issues of wellbeing that, once addressed, could unlock a more peaceful future came, more so than any other.

Several indicated that they believe it is *'too simplistic'*, however a number of others could identify with this view, particularly in terms of education and young people, in that if you enhance the wellbeing of young people, particularly through education, a more peaceful future is possible.

This focus group also felt that segregation is a core issue with post-conflict challenges and that whilst this does impact wellbeing, it's not the only factor involved. Ensuring people have confidence, choice and control are also important factors which may be more difficult to address through the wellbeing perspective.

4. Wellbeing informing a shared policy narrative

How can wellbeing inform a shared policy narrative across central and local government in Northern Ireland?

There was strong consensus within and across each of the focus groups that a shared policy narrative is lacking, but that it is extremely important. Each of the groups felt that wellbeing would have the potential to do this, if the Executive and Local Councils made wellbeing their focus and there was a committed, practical approach to joined-up working to enable this to happen.

The focus group with older people was particularly vocal on this issue, arguing that there is little in the way of a shared narrative, evidenced by inconsistencies in services and provision across NI.

They felt that a shared policy narrative and cross departmental working would in turn enhance wellbeing, particularly if wellbeing was the focus of this shared narrative.

This group highlighted the potential window of opportunity to look at a shared narrative at least at local council level with the implementation of the Review of Public Administration. Whilst they voiced uncertainty about what the changes will mean for older people in particular, they felt that there is the potential for improved communication and shared learning between councils which would benefit people and could ultimately enhance wellbeing.

The young people who participated in the focus group suggested that a shared narrative could also be important in measuring wellbeing and empowering communities to become involved.

The representatives of the women's sector also believed there is no shared narrative, evidence by Government Departments *'working in silo'* at the moment. A shared narrative, they suggested, would force Departments to share information and resources to enhance wellbeing, instead of focusing only on their own work and targets.

The focus group with ethnic minorities, like the older people, suggesting that wellbeing could provide this shared narrative, providing a main focus and overarching targets.

They also argued that, with any shared narrative, wellbeing should play an important role and all policies and decisions flowing from this should be analysed for their impact on wellbeing.

5. Outcomes-based approach

How might an outcomes-based approach be embedded in government at all levels in NI? What outcomes should the Government aspire to in the next two Programmes for Government?

Focus group participants agreed that an outcomes-based approach is important, if the outcomes are meaningful and realistic.

One participant contended that, at the moment, the NI Executive very often *'hits the targets, but misses the point'* in terms of making an impact on people's lives and that a focus on wellbeing in decision-making, provided it's joined up across Government Departments, could help to rectify this.

There was some discussion among the older people and women's focus groups about the need for meaningful consultation to make sure that outcomes will benefit people and allow for a more rounded process.

All of the focus groups spent more time, however, discussing very specific actions they felt would improve the wellbeing of their communities. Common themes across the groups, however, included increasing job creation, supporting people towards employment and ensuring that any service or funding provision is sustainable.

For the ethnic minority communities focus group outcomes the NI Executive should aspire to better integration and understanding of ethnic minority communities and higher employment for ethnic minorities.

Actions they identified to achieve this included more education and programmes to promote integration, the establishment of an organisation to help ethnic minorities develop the practical skills needed to seek a job e.g. writing a CV, writing applications, interview preparation, translating qualification to NI equivalents, and targeted literacy and English (language) classes for ethnic minorities.

The older people spoke of the provision of services to prepare people for retirement, actions to enhance social justice, improving infrastructure, removing barriers to volunteering and using the volunteer resource effectively.

In particular, they spoke of having sustainable funding for support groups, indicating that decision-makers need to recognise the knock on effects of funding ending. For example, if funding ends, groups may have to charge or increase price of the activities or services they provide which in turn may mean people stop coming and increases social isolation.

Improving economic outcomes were dominant in the focus group with young people. They were particularly supportive of a suggestion from one participant that Government examine how you employ or help young people get jobs when they finish education or training relevant to their qualifications – monitoring how many young people move immediately into jobs relevant to their qualifications would assist in measuring wellbeing, they felt.

Other actions highlighted by the young people included reducing waiting times in the HSC, increasing the renewable energy sector for job and environmental reasons, maintaining and reducing higher education fees, standardising teaching so you can monitor and measure the level and quality to teaching and in turn measure educational wellbeing.

Whilst the women's group also agreed that an outcomes-based approach is important and that consultation and communication both across Departments, other structures of governance and with the wider public is important, they also contended that many of the outcomes and actions are already known.

They argued that many of the strategies and plans that would improve outcomes and enhance wellbeing for people across Northern Ireland are already in existence and now need to be implemented.

6. Government mobilising communities

If the NI Government adopted a transparent performance framework, with wellbeing as a focus for measurement (statement of purpose, indicators, targets), how could the Government effectively mobilise communities of users (policy designers, civil servants, local government, the private sector, NGOs, think tanks, citizens)?

Responses to this focused mainly on how local communities can be mobilised. Sustainable funding was a common theme in the responses of the focus groups here. Many participants felt that ensuring the sustainability of funding would be important to mobilise local communities, as more certainty would allow for more long-term planning for projects and activities which, at their heart, are about improving wellbeing.

Beyond this then, participants felt measuring wellbeing could also be enhanced through the evaluation of such programmes.

For example, the ethnic minority focus group spoke of the need to provide funding for support organisations which have the knowledge and experience to mobilise and reach out to ethnic minority communities. The practical support and programmes they provide could then be used to measure wellbeing – increased employment among ethnic minorities, numbers of people moving out of poverty, reduction in racially motivated incidents – particularly among or against young people.

Empowering communities to help with the measurement of wellbeing was also highlighted by the focus group with older people who suggested that consideration should be given to measuring the number of clubs, groups and forums offering support to older people (and by extension other sectors or communities) and their reach.

They also spoke of the number of excess deaths from fuel poverty and the level of usage of travel passes, particularly in rural areas, as potential measures of wellbeing.

Whilst they were vocal about the importance of sustainable funding to empower and mobilise communities, they also highlighted other ideas that do not require significant financial investment, if any, such as walking groups for older people than are good for physical and mental health.

They also highlighted an existing initiative – the University of the Third Age. With no central funding, this organises and provides courses and lectures on subjects decided by members – providing access to learning and opportunities for social engagement.

They believed that there are initiatives local communities can identify and develop to enhance and

improve wellbeing, but that more needs to be done, perhaps, to reach people who are not involved in other programmes or groups.

The representatives of the women's sector, in terms of measurement, again suggested that many of the policies and actions needed to enhance wellbeing are already there (with Government) and if they were implemented, their proper monitoring and evaluation would allow for more and better measurement of wellbeing.

By way of example, one participant pointed to the need to prioritise care for the elderly, to make this better for them and their carers. They said that the sectors and service providers know what has to be done and if the plans are implemented correctly, improvements in care for older people and easing of pressure on carers will allow enhanced measurement of wellbeing.

The need to properly, sustainably fund strategies and action plans was also highlighted as, without the proper funding, implementation – and as such, monitoring, measuring and evaluation – is difficult.

In terms of mobilising communities, one participant suggested consideration should be given to a societal response to an issue of significance to many people, like the care of older people.

She suggested, by way of example, that a programme whereby young people are asked to volunteer to provide care to older people for a few hours a week could help empower people to improve their own wellbeing and the wellbeing of others in their communities. Such a programme would address issues of social isolation for older people who have little interaction with others, ease the burden of care on carers, provide meaningful 'work experience' to young people and enhance social contact.

In this group, there was also some discussion on the need to be mindful in terms of how you measure issues of wellbeing, particularly amongst vulnerable people and any potential consequences.

Participants said that it is important that the voices of the vulnerable are heard and their wellbeing considered, but some forms of measurement could have the potential to raise anxieties and fears and this would be a very real concern for many people.

For example, if a woman is exposed to domestic abuse or has fear for her personal safety, talking to her about her wellbeing could exacerbate problems, as the very act of discussing difficult issues could increase anxiety or re-traumatise someone.

Therefore, it would be important to conduct any measurement in a sensitive way and to ensure that support or services are in place and made immediately available, should they be required.

Overall themes and conclusions

- All of the focus group participants welcomed the opportunity to engage with this conversation around wellbeing and are excited about the possibilities that could flow from a concentration on this issue;
- There is broad agreement with the idea that wellbeing would be a useful focus for the NI Executive and others in policymaking, with the exception of young people. The majority of young people involved here felt that the economy should be the overarching focus with wellbeing flowing from that;
- There is limited support for the view that many post conflict challenges are essentially issues of wellbeing and that if these are addresses, it could unlock a more peaceful future – whilst participants could understand the argument, many felt it was too simplistic and that there are wider issues at play, not only wellbeing;
- Common across all groups was the need for sustainable funding streams so projects can be adequately resourced, allowing for community engagement leading to enhanced wellbeing and improved measurement of wellbeing;
- As could be expected, all of the focus groups were keen to discuss very practical elements of wellbeing and actions that would both improve wellbeing and the measurement of such. To that end, they were perhaps less reflective of the wider narrative outlined in the report;
- The ongoing challenge will be therefore be to reflect the work of the roundtable in a way bridges the gap between the theoretical framework and how this is understood by people in relation to their everyday lives;
- Each of the groups involved in this process are keen to be kept up to date and be involved in the process, should the appropriate opportunity arise.

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- Ballymena Inter-Ethnic Forum
- Age Sector Platform
- Where Is My Public Servant (WIMPS?)
- Women's Resource and Development Agency.

Appendix 2: Stakeholder Interviews Report

PART ONE: INTRODUCTION

Methodology

This report is an account of the semi-structured interviews with 16 individuals and organisations identified as key stakeholders in the work of the Roundtable and voices from whom the Roundtable was keen to hear.

The interviews took place in May and June, 2014 and were structured around six questions: wellbeing as a useful focus for government, priorities for subjective and objective wellbeing measurement, wellbeing and post-conflict and legacy challenges, wellbeing as a shared policy narrative, an outcomes-based approach to the Programme for Government, and how wider engagement with a performance framework could be achieved. The full questions are at Appendix B.

Interviewees were provided with the questions in advance together with a copy of the Trust's report 'Measuring Wellbeing in Northern Ireland, a new conversation for new times'. Each interview lasted between an hour and an hour-and-a-half and was recorded for note-taking purposes only. Interviewees were told that they would not be quoted on an attributed basis without their permission. A selection of unattributed quotations is at Appendix C.

The responses and issues raised by interviewees are set out in Part Two below under headings that are also emerging as those likely to figure in the roundtable's final report. The text in Part Two reports on but does not comment upon what interviewees have said.

Nine questions for the Roundtable to consider

The following section sets out a number of highlights – issues that came across particularly strongly or that have not arisen in the Roundtable's deliberations and which it may want to address in future discussions or in the final report.

In the order in which they arise in the text (Part Two), these issues are:

I. In what way should the work of the Roundtable relate to or build upon the Community Relations Council's Peace Monitoring Report? (Para 9)

II. What does a compelling wellbeing narrative look like? (Paras 10-15)

III. Is it sufficient to say that if our political parties can agree a set of shared outcomes then 'they can slug it out politically on how to achieve them' or does the Roundtable want to make suggestions on, for example, the implications for wellbeing of procurement policy and practice? (Para 14)

IV. What is our view on the potential for viewing post-conflict and legacy challenges through the lens of wellbeing in order to unlock a more peaceful future? In other words, insofar as there is a wellbeing dimension to be addressed as part of the post-conflict agenda, what contribution can such responses make to the process of unlocking the capabilities required for the peaceful negotiation of the future of NI society? (Paras 16-24)

V. In what way do sustainable development and environmental issues connect with wellbeing? (Paras 6,26)

VI. If Northern Ireland's unique form of government poses challenges to the successful implementation of an outcomes-focused approach, how can those challenges be addressed? (Paras 27-29)

VII. What is our view on the relative merits of measuring subjective and objective wellbeing? (Paras 32-37)

VIII. In what ways can the work of the Roundtable inform the current transition phase of local government and in particular the development of community planning? (Paras 30,44-46,54)

IX. If the voluntary sector is seen as a key partner in both the delivery of wellbeing and in engaging wider civic society, how should the issues of voluntary sector independence be addressed? (Paras 47-48)

PART TWO: THE INTERVIEWS

Wellbeing as a focus for Government

1. The concept of wellbeing as a focus for the Northern Ireland Executive, local government and their partners received overwhelming, although not unanimous support from, interviewees. Reasons given fell into three main categories: potential impacts on inequality and poverty, wellbeing's role as a vision for government and a welcome shift away from a purely economic focus. There were some concerns and a little scepticism.

2. A number of interviewees took the view that a focus on wellbeing could help bring attention to the least well-off in society, especially those who are likely to be left behind as we appear to be achieving a measure of economic recovery. Those on the lowest incomes tend to be the most dependent on public services, yet a feature of economic recovery is the austerity that means diminished levels of public services. A focus on wellbeing would give the gaps left by those services the necessary attention. Rural poverty is often hidden and consequently does not receive the priority it deserves. An approach that starts with the wellbeing of people and communities would help change this situation.

3. Many interviewees considered that the widening economic inequality that we have experienced in recent decades and that continues to grow is antithetical to wellbeing. A wellbeing focus by Government would enable this inequality to be addressed.

4. The idea that wellbeing can provide a unifying 'vision' for the Government came through strongly from some interviewees. This was born out of a feeling that there is no currently compelling vision beyond a general aspiration to prioritise the economy. Wellbeing is seen as 'a holistic concept that can fundamentally change the approach we take' and can *'deliver a more inclusive agenda that attends to the membership of society and not the structures of society.'*

5. The opportunity to move beyond or away from GDP as the measure of societal progress and what was seen as a largely economic focus by the Government was welcomed by most, 'This is more than useful, it is fundamental'. Concerns ranged from the inadequacy of GDP in that it measures 'economic bads as well as goods and tells us nothing about inequality' to the more philosophical, 'If economic success is what defines us, we might dehumanise others'. For some, concern about the Government's emphasis on the economy stemmed from the fact that they considered it to be based on what has become the orthodox neo-liberal view despite the fact that this is actually quite far right of the centre. Anything that challenges this neo-liberal consensus was therefore welcome. A focus on wellbeing could help to put right some of 'the huge social consequences of unpicking society over the last 40 years'. It would be wrong, however, to abandon material wellbeing as a societal aim on the basis that we can move on to 'higher'

forms of wellbeing. Material deprivation remains a reality for many with '57% of households in Northern Ireland earning less than £20,000 a year.'

6. One interviewee put it: *'Economic measurement is still important, but growth cannot go on forever. The economy has grown, but wellbeing has declined.'* There was also concern about the fact that the environment loses out to the pursuit of growth and the failure to recognise that the environment and the economy do not need to be in conflict. Rather attending to the environment can be a driver of prosperity: *'The only competitive economies in 2050 will be the low carbon ones'* and we need to innovate now to make sure we are one of those.

7. Cautionary notes were sounded by some. Speaking from a business perspective, one interviewee was broadly welcoming of wellbeing as a focus for the Government, but said that everything depended on the definition. Similarly, perhaps, a trades union perspective was concerned that we should not abandon the goal of material wellbeing, as mentioned above.

8. Another caution was that we should be wary of something that might be seen as a panacea for all our problems or material for sloganising, thus devaluing a useful and necessary concept.

9. One robust contributor was concerned about the effects of a contrived methodology: *'In pursuit of elusive concepts like wellbeing or peace, speciously precise pseudo-scientific frameworks are often constructed in an effort to sound convincing'*. And there was a concern about duplication of existing valuable work, such as the Community Relations Council's Peace Monitoring Report, which is actually about the wellbeing of our society: 'do we really need another one?'

Wellbeing as a shared narrative

10. Views on the existing government narrative coalesced around the judgement that there is either no shared narrative or if there is one, it is about the economy and job creation and even this is not necessarily shared. The general view was that this is at best inadequate and for some unacceptable being based on *'the very narrow neo-liberal view that all we need to do is grow the economy and the private sector will do that for us.'* There was little sense that the public perceives an existing narrative: *'The public currently has no sense of any kind of joint purpose at government or local government level that aims to benefit people, beyond the narrative of economy and jobs.'*

11. The prospect of a shared narrative about wellbeing across government was universally welcomed.

12. There was a feeling that wellbeing can be difficult to communicate: *'The narrative needs to be something that people understand.'* Often, wellbeing is interpreted narrowly as 'health'. *'Narrative needs to be shared and understood. People need to understand what wellbeing means*

and it needs to be agreed. This is challenging.'

13. The normative aspects of the narrative were important to a number of interviewees: '*The definition of wellbeing is not as important as the values and principles that underpin it.' 'All narrative begins with purpose – the 'why' of our lives. We want to make meaning and to construct our own myths – values are critical . . . The narrative should be one of real people's lives built on the twin impulses of memory and hope which must be connected.'*

14. From some perspectives, agreeing the underpinning values could be challenging – a narrative of wellbeing seems uncontroversial but we need to be clear about whether those values are the prevailing 'neo-liberal orthodoxies' or will the locus of power and control be challenged and is the pursuit of wellbeing compatible with outsourced and privatised public services. *'Wellbeing is likely to be unifying, but the devil is in the detail and may reveal ideological divides.'* One interviewee described how wellbeing was being compromised by procurement policies that resulted in locally-rooted services provided by NGOs being lost to large companies from outside Northern Ireland, which had none of the local knowledge that was vital to achieving wellbeing outcomes as opposed to a mere numbers targets.

15. There was a general assumption that the wellbeing narrative could help form a coherent Programme for Government that would help achieve the elusive goal of joined-up working across departments but the narrative also needs to be present across the whole public sector: *'If we are serious about this not just being an absence of disease, crime, inequality, discrimination, but about a country being well in itself then people need to define this in their mission statements.'*

Post-conflict and legacy issues

16. The relationship between a shared narrative based on wellbeing and the issues of community relations, building a shared society and dealing with the legacy issues of conflict was not straightforward. When asked about a shared narrative, these issues were not generally front-of-mind for interviewees. This could be because they had addressed an earlier question specifically on the issue of wellbeing and the legacy of conflict. One interviewee, for whom community relations is the central issue for our society, suggested that a narrative of wellbeing should not foreground the challenges of division and sectarianism. When approaching community relations from an anti-sectarian stance, the issue of what constitutes sectarianism is immediately controversial, rather: 'We need to approach community relations from a place where we are not already divided and wellbeing has the potential to help create shared narratives.'

17. Another suggested that wellbeing in Northern Ireland *'has to include cohesion, sharing, integration. ONS says NI is happiest region of UK but is being happy but separate OK? Clearly not. If your wellbeing policies do not include cohesion then you are creating a trade-off between*

immediate wellbeing and long-term stability and sustainability. There is a danger of saving up conflict for the future.'

18. The proposition of the earlier question that many of the post-conflict and legacy challenges are essentially wellbeing issues that, once addressed, could unlock a more peaceful future, had a mixed reception. There was a view that a focus on wellbeing could enable people to have discussions that they would otherwise not have, for example that the costs of division, in human and economic terms, diminish wellbeing. This could shift the focus away from the 'zero-sum game' of a 50/50 split in resources between communities. Further: *'Wellbeing can deliver improved community relations without overtly and publicly placing community relations at the top of the agenda where it will not be welcomed by many politicians.'*

19. An example given was that of victims: 'We cannot fix things for victims but we can provide a more inclusive healthy society committed to the individuals within it and a healthy environment for them to live in, so that every time they step outside their door they are not met with a mirror of the confusion in their own lives. This would require considerable political leadership and an end to the habit of politicians shamelessly strapping victims to themselves like body armour.' *Another interviewee said that the wellbeing focus could help 'people who are trying to shed a skin and to find a new face, mindset and disposition'.*

20. Other reactions were more lukewarm to the idea. 'Wellbeing is an important axis, but it will not unlock a peaceful future – the divides are too great' and 'Wellbeing is part of the jigsaw, but it cannot drive us forward.' were typical comments. The person who made the last comment continued: *'Wellbeing is part of a much bigger picture and therefore is not a backdoor means of dealing with the legacy of the past. But it is a useful tool amongst others and has a role and should be developed alongside a clear understanding that it is not a replacement for political leadership, the structures we have or why we have them are fundamental blocks that we have to tackle. Wellbeing will be sunk if it is somehow touted as the answer to all our problems.'*[Although this was not what was suggested in the question]

21. Another interviewee said: *'A focus on wellbeing could be in danger of masking the real issues. This is a structural issue that needs to be dealt with politically: structures of government but also education and health delivery, for example. While a project like this cannot stray into creating structures to 'deal with the past', a number of legacy issues can be dealt with using a wellbeing approach – eg education, health, culture. Wellbeing can help deal with sectarianism and the structures that feed it.'*

22. And another view: *'A focus on wellbeing gets us back to what we already know – those most affected by The Troubles are those closest to the violence and the least well off in society and with low levels of wellbeing. There is a truism about this. Use wellbeing in a contextualised way or*

it could just throw a blanket of wellbeing over anything. The wellbeing approach can be a useful tool, however, in doing cross-community work.'

23. Chiming with the 'truism' comment another interviewee said: '*This is true in an obvious way, but I am not sure that putting the wellbeing label on it illuminates things in any way. The legacy of conflict generates unhappiness which can be seen through the prism of wellbeing but how does that change how we approach the issue?'*

24. The question on post-conflict and legacy challenges sparked some strong views on the role of political leadership. This appears to be rooted in the concern that for many people, life is increasingly precarious and 'the danger is that people start to believe that peace hasn't made any difference.' a theme picked up another interviewee. *'Community tensions spring from being told that things are good, but people are not experiencing it. It is therefore very easy to tell them a story that will bring them out onto the streets. Economic deprivation lies at the root of people's vulnerability to exploitation for sectarian ends'* and a third said: *'The most marginalised are most easily lead down the path of political point scoring and do not change their voting patterns for fear of the other fuelled by media coverage which lacks analysis.'*

25. There was criticism of politicians 'There is very little political will or leadership to lead us out of everyday and graphic sectarianism. Good leadership is leaders taking it upon themselves to make a difference – to take informed risks for peace and reconciliation. Politicians are satisfied with the status quo – they have a vested interest in not creating change.' Another said: *'Ordinary people can get beyond the divisions if sectarian politics does not interfere. There are more important non-sectarian political issues for people and in tackling these division can be reduced. But when politicians perceive that their territory is being encroached upon, they will get involved in a divisive manner.'* And 'Post conflict issues depend on leadership, whether or not it is based on wellbeing. Redefining the issues as wellbeing does not change the nature of the problem. But the conclusion of the CRC's Peace Monitoring Report is that no-one picks up the tab for failure. There is no leadership.'

Sustainable development and environment

26. A number of interviewees expressed concern about issues of sustainable development and environment and how these connect to the wellbeing agenda. *'Environment and sustainability issues are completely neglected by political parties. It is dangerous to assume that this is something that someone else will solve for us.'* It was felt that the environment usually loses out to the economy and we need to find a way that they are not locked in conflict (see 6 above). 'Sustainable Development is a narrative that is closely related to wellbeing. . . .SD and wellbeing are key cross-cutting themes and they are pretty much one and the same.'

A Performance Framework

27. An outcomes-focused performance framework for government met with universal approval from interviewees. Such a framework could provide transparency in the eyes of the public and provide safety for politicians, heralding a shift away from targets that can be 'gamed'. It could help government to deal with complexity by working across departmental boundaries in a structured fashion and lead to more effective resource allocation.

28. Embedding such an approach has a number of challenges. A high-level vision statement or meta-message is important 'comprising three things that Government wants to achieve and people can identify with.' It was felt that the two largest parties should be able to buy into a shared overarching statement although it would be more challenging to agree a set of shared outcomes. Nevertheless, it is important that those outcomes are sufficiently ambitious.

29. The comparison with Scotland was questioned on the basis of *'the uniqueness of our form of government. There is little debate within the Government even on shared objectives and smaller Executive parties are often excluded. So if this is about widening and broadening democracy, we are in trouble . . . If the Scottish Government fails to deliver outcomes they can be turfed out at the next election. The NI public doesn't have that option. This feeds the low ambitions of the electorate which feels trapped.'* An outcomes focus, however, could enable accountability that we currently don't have.

30. The Programme for Government is the context where the framework should be made real but its development needs to be much more inclusive and in particular needs to directly connect with local government in the form of a Programme for Local Government. The Scottish model of single outcome agreements with the local authority led community planning partnerships met with approval. This would be a significant cultural change.

31. It was also felt that some structural change may be needed – *'Eleven departments is not where you would choose to start from'* – although there was little expectation that we could follow the Scottish example and abolish departments.

Subjective and objective wellbeing

32. The question on priority challenges for subjective and objective wellbeing provoked some discussion on the relative merits of the two approaches. There was some scepticism that ONS data had concluded that Northern Ireland has a higher level of subjective wellbeing than the rest of the UK and that Fermanagh is the 'happiest' county in the UK. This did not seem to square with either perceptions or data on suicide, addiction and mental health issues, for example.

33. A strong argument was made in favour of focusing on measuring objective wellbeing and being very wary of subjective wellbeing measurement. The argument made was that one reason that Northern Ireland comes out well on the subjective wellbeing scale is that we have relatively low expectations. The danger is that people are influenced by groupthink and a media narrative that encourages us to be satisfied with our lot. We therefore report higher subjective wellbeing even though we are not experiencing it. People, it was argued, need to be encouraged to raise their aspirations to the living wage, for example, rather than be browbeaten by the view that this would damage Northern Ireland's competitiveness.

34. The interviewee concluded that this would mean that a decrease in the level of subjective wellbeing would actually be a good thing in that it would demonstrate that people's aspirations and expectations have been raised.

35. The importance of subjective wellbeing was highlighted by another interviewee, however: *'There is an inextricable link between subjective wellbeing and identity. The flags issue shows that many people feel their identity is under threat and this clearly impact on individual and community wellbeing.'*

36. The arts were seen as an important medium for enhancing subjective wellbeing. *'The intrinsic and transformative value of the arts and culture can support a concept of wellbeing which is the wherewithal to be able to deal with life's complexities, its ups and downs, its difficulties and in a way that is grounded and rounded and enables you to see things in perspective'*. And from another interviewee: *'The individual gaining control over a creative process makes people feel good. It is dealienating and can bring people back to themselves. Even as an audience member, the impacts on wellbeing can be important. The arts also exteriorise and challenge in ways that people find really stimulating.'*

37. Another dimension of subjective wellbeing was the importance to wellbeing of a spiritual and/or religious dimension to people's lives. *'Colleen Brown's work on "spiritual capital" is interesting in its emphasis on spiritual resources such as the idea of Sabbath, contemplative practice, thanksgiving and jubilee, for example.'*

Ways of working

38. Interviewees considered that an outcomes-focused performance framework requires significant change to processes.

39. Frustration with current planning cycles was expressed and the point was made that securing worthwhile outcomes can be a relatively long game. Rather than the current four year comprehensive spending review cycle we need to move to a 10-year planning and funding cycle.

40. Joined-up working across departments is clearly a challenge in the eyes of interviewees. While they see the outcomes approach as a great opportunity we should not underestimate the engrained habits of a siloed government: *'The civil service default will be how to work a new system back into something more familiar' and this will be 'exacerbated by bad relations between the DUP and Sinn Fein'.*

41. There were more positive responses, however. One interviewee pointed to the joint DEL and DETI Economic Inactivity Strategy as a good model. A senior civil servant said: *'The Northern Ireland Civil Service is more collegiate than many civil services. Although the structures dictate that most of the time people work in the usual way, they are open to a way of working that cuts across the usual silos.'*

42. Procurement practice was raised: *'The Inspiring Impact Programme (with DSD) includes a move to more outcomes focussed commissioning by government but there is a tension with green book rules and dangers around how outcomes are specified (which will all be about wellbeing). Civil servants don't know how to specify outcomes – these should be developed with the beneficiaries. The practicalities of procurement militate against proper outcomes based grant making. Two interviewees highlighted the importance of 'budget incentives' and 'budget pressure'* to work across departments.

Evaluation

43. There was a view among some that the way in which the Government constructs its business cases will need significant reform if the wellbeing outcomes are to be achieved. *'Government's evaluation frameworks need to be reframed so that there is a two way relationship and holistic measurement. But the Green Book is highly technical and economically driven and does not relate to the citizen waiting for some form of impact.'* There was recognition that an outcomes approach carries risks of which current processes would not be tolerant: *'There are concerns about the rules and who will carry the can if things go wrong. Green Book rules militate against cooperation.'*

Local Government

44. The role of local government and its relationship with central government was an important theme. The current reform of local government is seen as a fundamental change from an essentially process driven relationship to one of 'power and responsibility'. The traditional relationship was described as 'parent-child' with local authorities expected to 'report-in'.

45. The role of community planning is expected to be central to a more mature relationship between central and local government. With local authorities leading the local community planning partnerships, there is the opportunity to place a strong focus on wellbeing. However: *'The Local Government Act does not take us to an outcomes approach' and there was concern that 'the commitment from central government to community planning is legislatively weak'* and a belief that 'central government doesn't want to be tied to local agendas' as it reduces their flexibility and budgetary control.

46. There were two different views on the potential of the current transition phase of local government. On the one hand, the nuts and bolts of transition were seen as such an all-consuming task that it would be the 2020 Programme for Government before the new local councils could really effectively engage in the process. The other view was that during 2015, local authorities could play a leadership role in engaging communities in an inclusive process feeding into the Programme for Government.

The voluntary sector

47. The relationship between the voluntary sector and government was raised by a number of interviewees. *'The voluntary sector struggles to hold government to account because they are caught up in service level agreements. Government will procure the voluntary sector to deliver outcomes thus neutralising their accountability role and will blame them if outcomes are not delivered.'* This appears to suggest that including the voluntary sector in the delivery of agreed outcomes could lead to further neutralisation.

48. Another voice put it this way: *'The independence of the voluntary sector is a growing issue. Is civil society now just a delivery mechanism for government? Procurement and contracts lead to co-option. Is the voluntary sector simply a delivery mechanism for the programme for government? The balance has been skewed away from the civic voice role to the service delivery function.'* In contrast to the previous quotation, this interviewee thought: *'This could possibly change if the achievement of wellbeing was seen as not being just the job of government.'*

Engagement

49. The scope for wider democratic participation was widely welcomed and the necessity recognised. Against a background of diminishing participation in politics in developed countries, there was a view that alienation is particularly marked in Northern Ireland. This lack of engagement may be a reflection of disillusion with the new institutions and the danger 'that people start to believe that peace hasn't made any difference' as mentioned above. The significance of participation to wellbeing was highlighted: *'Participation is both a means to an end and an end in itself; it results in better decision making but also improves the wellbeing of the individual.'*

50. There were significant barriers to be overcome, however. *'Representative democracy is the only show in town and there is no space for participative democracy in Northern Ireland . . . Civic engagement has always been assumed in Scotland whereas in Northern Ireland that is specifically not the case . . . The UK government commitment to the Open Government Partnership does not extend to us; it mostly works out at an English level.'*

51. There would be considerable interest from the NGO community in: *'A national conversation about what matters – a great idea and one which the voluntary and community sector would devour.'* The voluntary sector role in engagement is seen as threefold: as a sector with expertise and views to contribute, as a catalyst for wider citizen participation and as a means of holding the Government to account. It is in this last role that a number of interviewees feel the sector is compromised as the nature of its relationship with government becomes more contractual. See 44 and 45 above.

52. There was a degree of scepticism from a business perspective about widespread participation. This appears to be born out of a concern that the issues are too complex for such participation and also that it is very difficult to get business people to give up significant amounts of time to become involved. A more realistic participative structure might be 'a small group based on the social partners'.

53. Democratic participation in politics focused on wellbeing outcomes would be a very significant step change beyond the kind of consultation that currently takes place. There needs to be recognition, however, that not everyone has the desire or capacity to get involved. *'Two levels of participation may be needed: for those who want to actively engage and for those who don't have the time or inclination but do have a view.'* This needs to be accompanied by a wider education programme to enable effective participation at whatever level.

54. In practical terms the role of local government in building participation was seen as potentially important, building on existing good practice in a number of councils. More specifically, community planning was seen as a front-runner in terms of a process that could secure strong

engagement if well designed. It was noted, however, that this remains largely a blank sheet of paper.

55. It was observed that participative practice has been around for a long time and remains very challenging. While it is important to be careful not to overstate the potential of digital media, it is possible that if well thought through, the use of new media 'could be a game-changer'.

56. Another interviewee observed that many deliberative processes exist that could be harnessed but that there is particular potential in using the creativity of the arts sector. Engagement through festivals and events such as Culture Night could engage people in entertaining and creative ways.

Appendix 3: List of individuals and organisations from whom evidence was received

Roisin McDonough	Arts Council
Anne McCusker	Belfast Healthy Cities
Nigel McKinney	Building Change Trust
Paul Braithwaite	Building Change Trust
Nigel Smith	CBI
Anthony Soares	Centre for Cross Border Studies
Paul Regan	Citizens UK
Conor Shields	Community Arts Partnership
Ken Logue	Consultant
Gerry Ward	Council on Virginia's Future
Paul Nolan	CRC Peace Monitoring Report
Judith Gillespie	Formerly PSNI
Rev Dr Lesley Carroll	Fortwilliam & Macrory Presbyterian
Dr Geraldine Smyth OP	Church
Les Allamby	Irish School of Ecumenics
Paul McFlynn	Law Centre NI
Christine Berry	Nevin Economic Research Institute
Terry A'Hearn	New Economics Foundation
Lisa McElherron	NI Environment Agency
Derek McCallan	NICVA
John McVey	NILGA
Marco Mira d'Ercole	NIPSA
Glenn Everett	OECD
John Langtry	ONS
Kate Clifford	PhD Candidate
Ruchir Shah	Rural Community Network
Paul Bradley	SCVO
Siobhan Weir	Shelter Scotland
Liam Hannaway	SkillsActive
Jim Kitchen	SOLACE

Mark Dougan	Sustainable NI
Chris Morris	The Prince's Trust
Professor John Baker	Ulaidh Research Consultancy
Dr Elke Heins	University College Dublin
Dr Jennifer Brown	University of Edinburgh
Dr Karen Scott	University of Glasgow
Dr Christopher Boyce	University of Newcastle
Gregory Manion	University of Stirling
Kevin Murphy	University of Stirling
Kathleen Doyle	Voluntary Arts Ireland
Helen Wilding	Volunteer Scotland
Kate Cassidy	Wellbeing for Life, Newcastle Welsh Government

The following gave evidence to the Roundtable at its formal meetings:

Denis Bradley	Freelance Journalist
Heather Moorhead	NI Confederation for Health and Social Care
Kathryn Torney	The Detail
Roger Halliday	Scottish Government
Christine Berry	New Economics Foundation
Moira Doherty	Department of Justice

The following took part in the Roundtable's study visit to Scotland:

John Swinney MSP	Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth
Sir John Elvidge	Former Permanent Secretary of the Scottish Government
George Black	Chief Executive, Glasgow City Council
Dette Cowden	Improvement Service
Stephen Gallagher	Head of Local Government Division, Scottish Government
Roger Halliday	Chief Statistician, Scottish Government
Dr Emma Miller	Senior Research Fellow Strathclyde University
Bruce Whyte	Public Health Programme Manager, Glasgow Centre for Population Health
Claudia Beamish MSP	Shadow Minister for Environment and Climate Change
Jamie Livingstone	Head of Oxfam Scotland
Stephen Boyd	Assistant Secretary, STUC

Professor George Morris	
Fiona McDiarmid	Principal Research Officer, Scottish Government
Marion Gillooly	GIRFEC Implementation Advisor
Catherine Bissett,	Principle Researcher, Scottish Government
Debbie Headrick	Justice Analytical Unit

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